



Shalom Flock of the Lord!

Of Sheep and Shepherds

Moses was a shepherd (*roi*—ro-EE in Hebrew), tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, on the back side of the desert, when God appeared to him in a burning bush. His shepherd's rod became a supernatural tool of deliverance as the Lord anointed it for the purpose of showing the children of Israel that the LORD God of their fathers had indeed chosen Moses to shepherd His People (Psalm 77:20).

As we studied sheep, shepherds, flocks and lambs from Genesis to Revelation recently, we found over 700 references to them in the Bible. In fact, sheep are the most frequently mentioned animal in the Holy Scriptures. This is not surprising, considering the fact that God in the Tanach, and Yeshua in the Brit Hadasha, refer to themselves as shepherds, and their people as sheep.

We have mentioned many times that the first time a word is used in the Bible has significance. The first mention of "lamb" (which occurs 102 times in the NKJV), is found in Genesis 22:7, *"But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb [ha-seh הֶשֶׁה] for a 'burnt offering'?"* The second mention is found in Exodus 12:3, *"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb [seh שֶׁה], according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household."* Both of these verses in their entire context foreshadow the Lamb of God, Yeshua, who would come to die as the final sacrifice for the sin of Israel and all mankind.

Suitable for Sacrifice

The God of Israel laid claim to the firstborn of a flock, *"All that open the womb are Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, whether ox or sheep"* (Ex. 34:19). God not only wanted the first, He wanted the best. *"But if there is a defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God"* (Deut. 15:21). God's standard of sacrifice is perfection.

God didn't ask of His people what He Himself was not willing to give. The final sacrifice—God's only Son—was a perfect sacrifice. Sinless. Spotless. Holy (Heb. 7:26). *"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year..."* (Ex. 12:5). Yeshua was The Lamb—and the calendar which is used all over the world—revolves around Him (A.D. means Anno Domini, "in the year of our Lord").

God: Shepherd of Israel

God, as Shepherd, is one of the most famous images in the Bible. *"The Lord is my Shepherd..."* is a phrase heard at funerals of both believers and unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles, in every country worldwide. Why? When faced with the reality of death, as well as their own mortality, it is a comfort for people to hear that God has a forever house, and that the grave is not an end in itself.

The desire of God's heart, however, is to be Shepherd to His People while they are alive. The prophet Isaiah, referring to the God of Israel remarked, *"He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young"* (Isa. 40:11). The psalmist said of God, *"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!"* (Ps. 80:1).

God's people are often referred to as sheep in the *Tanach*. They are the "tzone El," the flock of God. Referring to the Exodus from Egypt, the psalmist wrote, *"But He made His own people go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock"* (Ps. 78: 52). *"For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."* (Ps. 95:7) Perhaps one of the most famous verses that refers to God's people as sheep is found in Ps. 100:3, *"Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture."*

Lost Sheep of the House of Israel

Unfortunately, God's sheep went astray, as we all have, wandering from the Shepherd who longs to protect and provide for us. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way..."* (Is. 53:6) The psalmist expressed the same thought: *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments"* (Ps. 119:176).

The prophet Micaiah saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep without a shepherd (1 Kings 22:17). This was not God's fault, but Israel's. His people were prone to wander, but the shepherds who God had appointed to lead them were also to blame. God has a lot to say about "bad shepherds": *"My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains..."* (Jer. 50:6). *"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD.*" (Jer. 23:1) Much of Ezekiel chapter 34 is a prophesy against the shepherds of Israel as commanded by the LORD. Read it to hear God's heart for the "lost sheep of the House of Israel."

Here are some of God's proclamations: *"...My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them"* (Eze. 34:6). *"For thus says the Lord GOD: 'Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.'*" (Eze 34:11). *"And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country".* (Eze. 34:13) *"...therefore I will save My flock (leshoNEE—my flock), and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd."* (Eze. 34:22-23) *"Thus they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people," says the Lord GOD. 'You are My flock, the flock of My pasture... says the Lord GOD.'*" (Eze. 34:30-31)

The shepherd referred to in verse 23 is Yeshua, the Messiah, the Son of David. The prophet was looking forward to the day that God would send the One who would be called the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20), the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

Good Shepherds

Yeshua said of Himself, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep"* (Jn. 10:11). He is the Greater Son of David. David was a type of shepherd/king, a foreshadowing of a Messiah who would come to earth the first time as a lowly Shepherd, and will soon come again as a ruling King. One Messiah. Two comings. Our Jewish people have historically found it difficult to reconcile this shepherd/king reality.

David was a good shepherd. He kept his father's sheep, protected them from lions and bears, led them to still waters and green pastures, and lovingly met all their needs. God saw his faithfulness as a shepherd of sheep, and entrusted him with shepherding His People Israel: *"...thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel'"* (2 Sam. 7:8). The Lord continued with promises for His servant David, including a promise that would be fulfilled through Yeshua, the Good Shepherd: *"And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever..."* (2 Sam 7:16). Both Mary and Joseph were of the royal Davidic line. Thus, by both His mother and His earthly father, Yeshua had a right to the throne of Israel—a Shepherd/King like His ancestor David.

We noted in our studies that "good shepherds" always "watered their father's flock." This included good shepherdesses as well. Rachel (Gen 29:9), Joseph (Gen. 37:2), and the daughters of Jethro (Ex. 2:16), all tended and cared for their father's flocks. Yeshua was the supreme example of a Shepherd who lovingly cared for His Father's flock, especially the sheep who were lost without a shepherd: *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"* (Matt. 9:36). [Abba, help us to give living water to our Father's flock!]

At a 6:00 AM prayer meeting in July of 1976, Neil was overcome by an unexplainable grief from deep within (the *"kishkes"* in Yiddish), and the Lord spoke to him: "This is how I feel about the lost sheep of the House of Israel." When Neil asked the Lord what He wanted Neil to do about that, God replied: "I want you to start a Messianic synagogue." We had no idea what that was, but Temple Aron HaKodesh has been in existence since that date, and we are still there—in the same seats!

Sheep in Shir HaShirim

Jamie is in the process of writing a sequel to *A Kiss A Day*, her daily devotional on the Song of Songs. This book will encompass chapters three through five, and includes times of affliction and separation—when the bride does not experience the same closeness with the Bridegroom due to trials and spiritual slumber. Nevertheless, the Bridegroom's love remains unchanged.

Twice in the Song (4:2 and 6:6) the Bridegroom says to his bride (us!): *"Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come up from the washing, every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them."* This is a compliment. The bride is maturing. Babies don't have teeth. (See Heb. 5:13-14.) The one the Bridegroom loves is now partaking of the "meat of the Word." She is washed by the Word, and is fruitful. The image of beautifully matched white teeth as compared with "twins" is obvious. Not so obvious is the fact that sheep usually bear twins. If a sheep gives birth to only one lamb, it is not considered fruitful.

Yeshua does not want us to be spiritually "barren." We become fruitful by abiding in the Beloved, chewing on His Word until it becomes part of us, obeying His commandments, and loving God and others. We are encouraged to follow a path that helps us partake of Yeshua's divine nature: *"... giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Yeshua HaMashiach"* (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Just as the teeth chew the food for the whole body, Yeshua's bride is called to spend herself in feeding and serving others. Yeshua said to Peter, *"Do you love Me?...Feed My sheep."* (Jn. 21:17). Peter later said to the Messianic leaders, *"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock..."* (1 Peter 5:2-3). We have tried to follow this counsel over the years.

Your prayers for Jamie are appreciated, as she tries to carve out time in her busy days for writing. The preparation of the bride is on God's heart!

Lessons from a Shepherdess

We recently came across a delightful and spiritually enlightening book by Margaret Feinberg called *Scouting the Divine: my search for God in wine, wool and wild honey*. About twenty years ago, we stayed in Margaret's parents home in Steamboat Springs, Colorado when she was beginning her writing career. We were thrilled to find a book that she had written, and even more thrilled to see what a fantastic writer she has become. You will really enjoy this book!

To find out about sheep, Margaret spent time with a shepherdess on her Oregon farm where she raises Shetland sheep. Margaret was seeking a better understanding of the analogies and metaphors involving sheep in the Holy Scriptures. We'll share just a portion of the revelations and parallels that unfolded as Margaret, Lynne the shepherdess, and the sheep spent time together.

Gates: Gates are crucial to the sheep's survival. Not only do they keep the sheep in, they keep predators out. (Boundaries are essential to our spiritual survival.)

Pasture: In ancient times, the flocks had to be led to a new field for grazing each day, especially in Israel where green grass was scarce. (We must feed on today's bread.)

Names: Shepherds have a personal history with each sheep and call them by name. They know their sheep, and their sheep know them. (John 10:14-27)

Discipline: Sheep need discipline. They must respect the authority of the shepherd. Undisciplined sheep can cause great damage to a flock. (Heb. 12:5-11)

Bonding: The shepherdess told Margaret: "Once they respond to my beckoning I have them forever." (John 10:28) We know our Shepherd's voice, and are moved by it. (Jn. 10:4)

Standards: The best of a flock—the one with the finest fleece that will produce the strongest offspring—take years to produce. (That is what God required: a big sacrifice. He wants our best!)

Food: The greatest threat to the sheep in Oregon was not predators, parasites or poisonous plants, but too much good food! Sheep often kill themselves by upsetting the delicate balance of their rumen by eating too much grain or rich new green grass. (overfed, spiritually obese believers in the U.S.A.)

Protection: Sheep are not dumb. They are defenseless. They gather tightly together as a flock because it is the only thing they can do to protect themselves from predators. (Heb. 10:25)

Love: A good shepherd loves his or her sheep and has compassion on them, accepting the differences between the sheep. (Jn. 10:11) We are all special to God.

Israel 2015: Preparing for Passover

This Mercy Mission will be extra special. We will celebrate Purim, and give much needed aid for the upcoming Passover holiday. We will pray for healing at the site of the Pool of Bethesda, near the ancient "Sheep Gate." It is time to contact Regina at 1-800-336-2876.

Much Love in the Great Shepherd,

Neil & Jamie

Jewish Jewels Television Airtime Schedule - August 2014

LOCAL TV STATIONS

| AIRTIME: | STATE: | CITY: | STATIONS: |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| TUE 6:00 PM | AK | North Pole | KJNP TV 4 |
| MON 10:00 PM | FL | Tampa/St. Pete. | WCLF TV 22 |
| THU 11:30 AM | FL | Miami/Ft. Laud. | WHFT TV 45 |
| SUN 1:30 PM | FL | Tallahassee | WVUP TV 45 |
| SAT 10:30 PM | FL | West Palm Beach | WFGC TV 61 |
| SUN 2:30 PM | GA | Columbus | WYBU TV 16 |
| SUN 1:30 PM | IA | Dubuque | KFXB TV 40 |
| THU 6:30 AM | ID | Twin Falls | KJCY TV 38 |
| SUN 1:30 PM | MO | New Bloomfield | KNLJ TV 25 |
| THU 8:30 AM | NC | Goldsboro | WHFL TV 43 |
| SUN 4:00 PM | NJ/NY | NYC/New Jersey | WMBC TV 63 |
| THU 5:30 AM | OR | The Dalles | KRHP TV 14 |

SATELLITE NETWORKS (EST)

DirecTV

SUN 4:00 PM Ch. 93 or 900 - WMBC
FRI 8:30 PM Ch. 376 - CTN (Christian Television Network)
 MON 11:30 PM Ch. 371 - Church Channel

Dish Network

FRI 8:30 PM Ch. 376 - CTN (Christian Television Network)
 MON 11:30 PM Ch. 258 - Church Channel



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MON 11:30 PM Ch. 565 - Church Channel

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