

CHAPTER 8

LOST AND FOUND: THE SAVING SHEPHERD

*For this my son was dead and is alive
again; he was lost and is found.*

—Yeshua

I HAVE A beautiful painting in my office of a sheepdog standing over a lost sheep in the cold of snow and fog on a stormy winter day. The dog is triumphantly calling out to the master shepherd with neck stretched high, because he has found a lost sheep they had been seeking. God said there is joy in heaven over even one lost sheep that is found and returns to Him through repentance (Luke 15:7). We are all lost sheep until we come to God humbly and repentantly. That is the lesson of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. But thanks be to the true Shepherd for seeking us until we are found, for binding our wounds, and for healing us physically, mentally, and, most of all, spiritually.

Notice the beautiful words of being lost but found, sick but healed, that the apostle Peter uses to describe being found and healed by our Shepherd and Passover. Notice how Peter ties in the characteristics of Jesus being our Passover with His also being the true, saving Shepherd and overseer of our souls:

Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the *Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*.

—1 Peter 2:23–15, emphasis added

Peter tied Yeshua's willing sacrifice as our Savior together with His being our Shepherd and Overseer. That's because the true Shepherd was willing to suffer personal loss for the sake of His sheep, like our Passover. Christ, in the book of Revelation, reveals Himself to us as both the Lamb of God and our Shepherd. His identity as our Passover Lamb is intricately tied with His being the Shepherd of our souls.

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains

of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

—Rev. 7:16–17

But in order to hear the voice of the true Shepherd, we first need to have ears to hear His voice when He calls for us. Do you hear Christ’s voice? Do you have spiritual ears to hear (Mark 4:23)?

God has graciously given us many warnings—too many to mention here—to beware of false shepherds, false ministers, and false brethren. We were warned about the “tares” among the wheat. We were warned that many false prophets and false teachers would arise, leading “the many” astray. Messiah warned us about wolves in sheep’s clothing. Our protection against being led astray is to hear only the true Shepherd’s voice and to always know He is lovingly ready to accept us back with humble repentance. God has often referred to Himself as the true Shepherd of Israel. David was a good shepherd. But he demonstrated that he looked to God as his personal Shepherd when he said, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). Indeed, David knew God was the Shepherd of Israel (Ps. 80:1) and of all those who are gathered into the fold of Israel (Rom. 17:11–23), for we all “are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (Ps. 100:3).

But how do we know which shepherds are serving the true Shepherd like David did? How can we recognize the truth and true folds today?

Let's take a journey by way of biblical examples of good and bad shepherds, and of the Chief Shepherd, Yeshua the Messiah!

Israel had a proclivity to shepherd sheep and cattle. When Joseph brought his family into Egypt he instructed them to tell the Egyptians that they were shepherds (Gen. 46:31–34). That was prophetic, but it was also a historical fact. Joseph knew it was best for them to continue in their old trade and that doing so would ensure their being kept separate from the pagan practices of Egypt.

After Moses fled Egypt, he spent forty years as a shepherd tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. That was good training before God called Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt like a flock (Ps. 77:20). Some of Israel's greatest leaders were first and foremost shepherds (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, King David, and the Greatest Shepherd, Yeshua).

With this in mind, consider the following:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

(John 10:1–5)

To help us better understand Jesus' illustration, I've done some studying of what shepherding was like in the land of Judea in the days of the Messiah.

SHEPHERDS IN PALESTINE

The area in and around Judea is, for the most part, rough and stony. It was suitable as pasture for roaming sheep, but less so for agriculture. As a matter of fact, that's where the root of the word *pastor* comes from. If a land was only suitable as free-range pasture requiring a shepherd—it was *pastoral*. To shepherd in a pastoral land could mean to guide the sheep through a rough, stony, and sometimes dangerous environment. For the flocks to stay in one place too long would quickly deplete the land, so a suitable guide who knew the landscape was required. A knowledgeable caring shepherd was required to guide the sheep to the many small but rich green pastures and to the fresh water brooks. Safety was also a concern. These were the conditions of the Judean landscape. The shepherd had to not only know the country, but be dedicated and brave as well. Shepherding was common trade in the stony uplands of Judaea, so those to whom Jesus spoke in John 10 understood well a depth of significance of what He was saying that is lost to most Westerners today.

Today we use sheepdogs, horses, and often fences to guide sheep. And we use dogs and guns to protect sheep from predators. That was not the case in the rocky pastures of Judaea in apostolic times.

Today we use sheepdogs and guns to protect the sheep from predators. That was not the case when Yeshua gave this meaningful parable.

Today many kill their sheep each year for meat, so the sheep are not usually around long enough to establish a bond with their shepherd—if there is one. That was not the case in upland Israel, where they used the sheep primarily for their wool. As such, the sheep would live many years, giving the shepherd time to get to know each of the sheep personally and to build somewhat of a rapport with the sheep. Many of the sheep were given names, and they all knew their shepherd's voice.

Because of the often steep and stony landscape, there was little grass, so sheep were bound to wander. With no fences or other protection, a shepherd was always on duty.

The work of a shepherd was not only constant, but dangerous; shepherds had to protect the sheep from both wild animals and robbers. Old English history and poetry is replete with examples of shepherds giving up their very lives to fight off thieves or wild beasts.

How did the shepherds of Jesus' day provide for and protect the sheep?

TOOLS OF THE SHEPHERD'S TRADE IN BIBLICAL TIMES

Scrip—the Shepherd's Bag

A scrip or shepherd's bag was made of animal skin in which the shepherd carried his lunch, usually

some cheese, bread, dried fruit, and olives. He also carried some olive oil and perhaps honey or other ointment with which he could care for the needs of the sheep should they be wounded. And last but not least, he kept stored some choicely-selected smooth stones for his sling, chosen for accuracy and weight.

Sling

As a young boy growing up on a farm in the country, I used a technique similar to that of the ancient shepherds of Judaea. I remember my brothers and I threw rocks over and across the other side of a river to drive a flock of young ducklings and their mother back toward us. We then caught a dozen or so ducklings and transferred them to our pond where they seemed content to stay and enjoy life for many years. (I don't advocate that as the best way to fill your pond with ducks or geese today. It was a different world then, and at that time we were four unsupervised boys.) Though the ducks would sometimes fly away, they always returned. We would employ the same tactic to recapture an escaped goat or turn back a wandering goose.

But the skill of a shepherd with a sling was truly a thing to behold. The shepherd would use his sling for two purposes. First, he used it as a method to guide the sheep. He would sling a stone under the nose of a wandering sheep to warn him to turn around and return to the fold, to guide him to greener pastures, or to safely navigate the sheep to a better path. A shepherd

in Judaea would become quite accomplished in the use of a sling because he got a lot of practice.

The second purpose of the shepherd's sling was as a weapon of offense or defense to protect the sheep from wolves or other wild animals. Remember, David was tending sheep when Samuel came to choose a king from the sons of Jesse (1 Sam. 16:11). As a shepherd, David became very adept with his sling. This is why David chose the sling as his weapon against Goliath (1 Sam. 17:39–40). David didn't want to use a sword because "he had not proven" it. He had proven the sling time and again. Just like a modern army uses sharpshooters, the tribe of Benjamin in Israel had an army division of their very best slingers, who could accurately deliver a deadly blow from quite a distance. Judges 20:16 tells us, "Among all this people were seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss."

Today, like a shepherd of old, God uses many things to warn us and to guide us along the best way. He turns us back when we go awry and lovingly cares for us, leading us to life. The prophet Isaiah wrote,

I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;
I will lead them in paths they have not known. I
will make darkness light before them, And crooked
places straight. These things I will do for them, And
not forsake them. They shall be turned back.

—Isa. 42:16–17

Staff

A staff was not a walking stick with a crook at the end of it. That was known as a shepherd's rod. If both a rod and a staff were walking sticks, then David's famous Psalm 23 would be a bit redundant and nonsensical. David did not say, "Your walking stick and Your walking stick, they comfort me. He did say, "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

A shepherd's staff was a short wooden club that had a lump or knot of wood at the end that was often studded with copper or iron nails, or with sharp shell, bone, or rock fragments. It hung from the shepherd's belt, via a strap with a loop in it. In use, he could put the strap around his hand so that he could not drop his weapon in battle. This was a close-combat weapon that he would often use to club the marauding beasts and robbers. The Bible is replete with evidence of the battle nature of the staff and the differing use of the rod. In summary, the staff was generally used against Israel's enemies to protect the flock of God and for strong, destructive punishment, whereas the rod was typically used on the sheep to correct them, to bring them into judgment, and to bring them back into alignment with God's will. For example, notice Isaiah 10:5: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation."

Here God is using the staff as a symbol of His righteous but severe punishment, sometimes leading to the destruction of peoples and even whole nations.

The staff was the brutal close-combat weapon of choice for the Judean shepherd, for it was up to him

alone to protect the flock from attackers. Notice now the three items we have so far covered (shepherd's bag, the staff, and the sling) all incorporated in this one verse by the great shepherd, King David. These were the weapons of choice for this young shepherd when he faced off against Goliath to protect God's flock Israel: "Then *he took his staff in his hand*; and he chose for himself *five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag*, in a pouch which he had, and *his sling was in his hand*. And he drew near to the Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:40, emphasis added).

Rod

The rod was a shepherd's crook. It could be used to catch the most stubborn sheep by hooking them around the neck and pulling them back so they would not continue to lead the other sheep astray. It was used to correct the sheep. Often, the shepherd might even give a little "crack" on the head or backside to the most stubborn sheep. Also, at the end of the day when the sheep were going into shelter, the rod was held horizontally close to the ground, and the sheep or cattle were made to pass under the rod before going from one area to another or into a shelter. The low-lying rod would get the attention of and thus calm the sheep. The shepherd would use the rod to count the sheep as they passed under it. This was also when the shepherd would examine the sheep for any injuries or sicknesses.

I learned, as a young man on my ranch, the importance of examining one's flock and looking them over for sickness and injuries. It was essential to watch how they ate, if they ate, how much they ate and drank, and to watch for a limp or a runny nose, and so forth. As each sheep passes under the shepherd's rod, the overall health and condition of each member of the flock can be determined.

For this reason, the "rod" became known as a form of judgment; the health and condition of the livestock was "judged" as they passed under the rod. If one was sick, it was pulled away from the rest of the flock and kept in isolation so it would not infect the others. If one was out of hand, the same rod would correct it. Also, as they passed under the rod, the shepherd counted to pay God His tenth of the increase, as well as to be sure that none were missing. Leviticus 27:32 says, "Concerning the tithe of the herd of the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD."

The priest Ezekiel recorded God's reference to using His rod to punish Israel and to separate her from the bad elements. Notice:

I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I *am* the LORD.

—Ezek. 20:37–38

When God says, “I will make you pass under the rod,” that is a reference to judgment, but for the good of His people. He is a loving Father.

God says His Son, the true Shepherd, will rule all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). When it comes to God’s rule and His laws, this rod of iron symbolizes no compromise! There is mercy, but it is accompanied with strength of resolve. God is not mocked, nor will His mercy be exploited.

Now with this understanding of the tools of the trade of a shepherd, let’s read Psalms 23 and be inspired anew:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads 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 You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs 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.

—Ps. 23:1–6

David had no fear, because he saw God standing over him to protect him with His powerful staff. That’s security! David knew God would not let him go too far astray, for God would (and did) use His guiding

rod of judgment to bring David back in line—for his good. That’s love. David knew God would guide him continually through the rocky crags of life and bring him to safe clean water and green pastures, a type of the paradise of God’s eternal kingdom. That’s the love and guidance of our true Shepherd.

David was able to passionately write Psalm 23 with all its encouragement because, as a shepherd himself, David understood the meaning behind the tools of the shepherd’s trade. Further, David understood that the real shepherd over Israel and the whole earth was our loving God and Father and His capable Son, Messiah Yeshua. I deeply hope that this little magnifying glass into God’s Word helps you to better appreciate what David wrote in Psalm 23 and to better understand what our Shepherd the Christ was saying in John 10. May the Lord open our eyes and give us ears to hear.

Now, as was mentioned earlier, most sheep in Israel were kept for their wool, so they would be in the flock for many years. The shepherd would get to know them well, even calling them by name; and they too knew their shepherd and recognized his voice.

LESSONS FROM THE CATTLEMEN

I was hunting elk with a friend up in the high country one year. This blessed forest land we were in was dotted with streams of running water and grassy meadows nestled among the pines, firs, and cedars. When we would come in at night from our hunt, we were graciously allowed to lodge by the fire in a mountain cabin used by a

group of old cattlemen when they were rounding up their herds before the harshness of winter set in. I remember well the discussions of these experienced men in their seventies. Certain of their cattle, they explained, were strong willed. Others, they said, were docile, alert, and always willing to follow their shepherd on horseback. Certain cattle are always the leaders among the herds, and the other cattle follow them.

A good lead-cow is docile and responsive to the shepherd's voice when he calls or whistles but is strong and respected in the eyes of the herd. A bad leader is also strong and respected among the herd but is not docile or responsive to the shepherd's call. Indeed, a bad lead-cow would often flee the voice of the shepherd in stubbornness to his own hurt, and the shepherd would later have to chase it down and rope it to safety. If he let it go, it would die in the deep snow and lack of winter vegetation. Worse yet, when it flees, because it is a leader, it often takes other good cattle with it, making the work harder. A good shepherd knows which cows are which, and uses that knowledge to his advantage. A wise shepherd knows how to augment the leadership of the good lead-cow. These older experienced cattlemen explained the use of the name and the bell. They give a name to the good lead-cows and put a bell around their necks. This way other cattle of the herd can know the location of the good lead-cows so they can follow them more easily. The herd always keeps the lead-cow with the bell within earshot. When the shepherds want to lead the herd to new fresh pastures, they always get

the leaders to follow first; then the others more easily follow the sound of the bell behind the shepherd. A good knowledge of the herd and territory is a must.

LESSONS FOR GOD'S SHEEP

The spiritual analogy for God's people is obvious. Many are leaders. But only a few are good leaders. Good leaders are well respected, and they hear the voice of the true Shepherd and follow only that voice. God's true sheep will always check to be sure they hear His voice before they follow along.

Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice." Have you thought about that? Do you recognize Christ's voice in your church or synagogue? Do you check to be sure you can recognize Christ's voice through those who minister to you? If not, perhaps you should consider why. Perhaps you may want to consider what decisions or actions God would have you take so that you can hear His voice on His Sabbaths and in your congregational fellowship—for God's sheep will not follow the voice of a stranger.

Notice what theologian William Barclay said about sheep: "It is strictly true that the sheep know and understand the eastern shepherd's voice; and that they will never answer to the voice of a stranger."¹

H. V. Morton also has a wonderful description of the way in which the shepherd talks to the sheep.

Sometimes he talks to them in a loud sing-song voice, using a weird language unlike anything I have

ever heard in my life. The first time I heard this sheep and goat language I was on the hills at the back of Jericho. A goat-herd had descended into a valley and was mounting the slope of an opposite hill, when turning round, he saw his goats had remained behind to devour a rich patch of scrub. Lifting his voice, he spoke to the goats in a language that Pan must have spoken on the mountains of Greece. It was uncanny because there was nothing human about it. The words were animal sounds arranged in a kind of order. No sooner had he spoken than an answering bleat shivered over the herd, and one or two of the animals turned their heads in his direction. But they did not obey him. The goat-herd then called out in one word, and gave a laughing kind of whinny. Immediately a goat with a bell round his neck stopped eating, and, leaving the herd, trotted down the hill, across the valley and up the opposite slopes. The man, accompanied by this animal, walked on and disappeared round a ledge of rock. Very soon a panic spread among the herd. They forgot to eat. They looked up for the shepherd. He was not to be seen. They became conscious that the leader with the bell at his neck was no longer with them. From the distance came the strange laughing call of the shepherd and at the sound of it the entire herd stampeded into the hollow and leapt up the hill after him.²

W. M. Thomson, in *The Land and the Book*, has the same story to tell: “The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his

voice, and follow on; but, if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger....I have made the experiment repeatedly.”³

Indeed, this is Yeshua’s picture as recorded by John. With this deeper understanding and, I trust, appreciation for what Christ was saying, I encourage you to read once more John 10:1–5 before proceeding.

This is a nice story, but how does it apply to us today; and what does this have to do with the Passover and our salvation? The answer to that is coming soon. But how can we be sure we are following the voice of a faithful shepherd? Let’s let God’s Word answer that for us right now.

In Isaiah 8:16 we read, “Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples.” God’s true disciples will always hold true to God’s testimonies and laws. This is also one way we can recognize those who are true leaders: Do they teach God’s laws, which are laws of love? Isaiah says that if they don’t keep God’s laws and testimonies, there is no light in them: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20).

This is why Yeshua said what He did about God’s laws:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore

breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

—Matt. 5:17–20

I, for one, would like to be called great in the kingdom of heaven, therefore I love and teach God's statutes, commandments, testimonies, and the whole of His Word to the best of my ability, for His law (Torah) is a light to my path and it increases my understanding and wisdom greatly! (Ps. 119:97–104).

How do we know the voice of a faithful shepherd? "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matt.7:16). *If a teacher doesn't realize that part of the gospel (good news) is the loving wisdom of God's perfect laws and testimonies, there is no light in his teachings (Isa.8:20). His teachings lack the scriptural authority to be followed—he is a stranger to the truth.* There are many decent, but misguided teachers who are "strangers" to Christ's gospel. Christ said His sheep "don't recognize the voice of strangers," and that they "flee" from them. If someone uses their voice in an attempt to dissuade you from obeying God, flee from their influence. They may be well meaning, but their doctrine has no light in it. The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1 ASV).

Paul said, "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

Most of us recognize the wisdom of God's words here, but many don't go so far as to obey them. Sadly, many do not flee from the voice of a shepherd who opposes God's laws. Of false shepherds, Christ said they can be known by their fruits (Matt. 7:15–23), that is, by what they teach and the way they live. He also said His people are to flee from teachers of "lawlessness," lest they be drawn away and need the rod of correction.

John understood what Jesus was saying very well, for later in his life he taught the very same thing:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.

—2 John 1:9–10 KJV

The reason we are to flee the voice of those teachers who are strangers to the God of Israel, is because lawless men corrupt good character (1 Cor. 15:33).

Now, back to symbolically rich teachings in John 10 about the Chief Shepherd:

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone

enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

—John 10:7–9

In verses 7 and 9 above, Christ says He is the door of the sheep.

In Ephesians 2:18 Paul said it was through Christ that we have access to the Father. The apostles knew that there was salvation by no other name under heaven, except Yeshua the Messiah (Acts 4:12). In Hebrews, He is called our perfect High Priest. Indeed, Christ is the door. But what does it mean to be the “door” of the sheep?

Again, Jesus’ analogy of the shepherd being the door is something His listeners would easily understand, but which is largely lost on many today. Once again, William Barclay’s excellent research proves very insightful.

“I am the door.” In this parable Jesus spoke about two kinds of sheepfolds. In the villages and towns themselves there were communal sheepfolds where all the village flocks were sheltered when they returned home at night. These folds were protected by a strong door of which only the guardian of the door held the key. It was to that kind of fold that Jesus referred in verses 2 and 3. But when the sheep were out on the hills in the warm season and did not return at night to the village at all, they were collected into sheepfolds on the hillside. These hillside sheepfolds were just open spaces enclosed by a wall. In them there was an opening by which

the sheep came in and went out; but there was no door of any kind. What happened was that at night the shepherd himself lay down across the opening and no sheep could get out or in except over his body. In the most literal sense, the shepherd was the door.

That is what Jesus was thinking of when he said: “I am the door.”⁴

In verse 9 Christ said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and come out and find pasture.” These words are rich with a symbolism that would have easily been picked up by the average Jew in Judaea. The phrase “go in and come out” was a common Hebrew phrase or idiom of the time with great meaning.

When I visited Jamaica, I quickly learned their idiom “Irie.” It means “Everything is going to be OK.” People of today know that. “*To go out and come in*” was an idiomatic phrase for the Hebrews that was used to describe absolute safety and security. It meant God was with them as their Chief Shepherd, so they need not fear. It meant they were going to be blessed by God. Notice these illustrative examples of the idiomatic phrase “going out and coming in” by the hands of a good shepherd:

- Numbers 27:16–17 (KJV) says, “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, *which may go out before them, and*

which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd” (emphasis added).

- In the blessings-for-obedience chapter God had this to say to Israel: “Blessed shalt thou be when thou *comest in*, and blessed shalt thou be when thou *goest out*” (Deut. 28:6 KJV).
- The words of Solomon, when he was concerned about his ability to be a good king, are telling: “And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how *to go out or come in*” (1 Kings 3:7 KJV, emphasis added).
- When asking for God’s blessings in his life, David said, “*The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in* from this time forth, and even for evermore” (Ps. 121:8 KJV).

So here again, the symbolism is great. Jesus’ audience understood the depth of what He was saying to them then, and we need to understand what He meant today. Hopefully, now we do.

Moving deeper into John 10 we read, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (John 10:10–11).

Here the character of a true shepherd is made clear: He is willing to suffer loss for the sake of his sheep. A hireling is more concerned about taking care of himself than he is in God's flock, and he does not teach or keep God's laws—including Passover and the annual Sabbaths.

Of course, no shepherd in this life is going to be perfect, except Christ, but His faithful servants strive to walk the same walk Jesus and His prophets and apostles walked, because they recognize their Passover and saving Shepherd.

John 10:14–15 says, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” Yeshua spoke of being the True Shepherd over God's sheep who would protect them with His life because He is our Passover, the Lamb of God who sacrificed Himself for us. He died so we can live! He is also the watchful Shepherd to keep us from being lost, and who will search for those who are lost until He finds them. He will save us! O the depth and beauty of God's Word and plan for man. Let all the earth praise and bless Him!

