



The Zion Letter

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God Uses Shepherds To Deliver His People

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I was praying early one morning recently. Everyone was asleep as I walked through the house I heard these words: **“I use shepherds to deliver My people.”** I immediately thought of King David and how he was a ruddy little shepherd boy who slew the Philistine Giant Goliath when no one else in Israel would dare even fight him. Then I thought of Moses and how he was a shepherd for forty years before God called Him to deliver His fellow Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. Next I recalled how Joseph the son of Jacob was also a shepherd boy. His brothers pushed him into a pit and sold him into slavery before he too delivered his fellow Israelites from certain death. Lastly, I remembered Yeshua/Jesus, The Good Shepherd who came to deliver His people from bondage to sin, and to give them eternal life. I have often heard Rabbi Michael Wolf, a friend and a theologian, say there is no higher calling than to be a rabbi. Of course, he is using a Messianic Jewish context. I would say this applies to Christian pastors as well. God uses shepherds to deliver his people more than kings, governors, presidents, generals, etc... But why does God mostly use shepherds to bring about major deliverance for His people in the Bible?



A few observations:

- 1. True shepherds protect their flocks** – (1 Samuel 17:34-36, David describes how he killed a bear and a lion in order to protect his flock).
- 2. Shepherds love their flock** The love of a shepherd is more than being pals with your pastor or *rabbi*. The love of a shepherd is time spent in prayer for a sick person; it's caring for a needy family and helping them get back on their feet. The love of a shepherd is Godly counsel, advice and wisdom offered to someone in

need of guidance. Too much familiarity is actually not a good thing for a shepherd and his flock. If the shepherd is God's anointed servant on earth to help bring deliverance in a person's life, there must be a wall of holiness, between the rabbi/pastor and the sheep. The Lord said to Kefa/Peter, **“Simon, son of John, do you love Me? and he said to Him ‘Lord, you know that I love You.’ Yeshua said to him, ‘Tend My sheep,’ (See John 21:15-17).** Yeshua was basically telling His chief Apostle, if you love Me, then go and love My Sheep. Sadly, too many people don't seek the counsel of their

shepherd when making major moves on the chess board of life... I always seek guidance from “The Good Shepherd” and from my earthly shepherds before making a major decision and to help me understand a calling. God's word says there is safety in a multitude of counsel, and God uses shepherds to deliver His people, often from themselves.

3. Shepherds water the flock

(Genesis 29:2-10) Shepherds water their flock with the Word of God, imparting the Ruach Ha Kodesh (Holy

Spirit), just as Yeshua promised rivers of living waters to anyone thirsty who comes to Him.

4. Shepherds give rest to their flocks – (Jeremiah

33:12). Each week people come to our synagogue on the Sabbath (day of rest) to find rest for their spirit, soul and mind. Hopefully they leave refreshed and ready for a new week!

5. Shepherds know their sheep and vice-versa – (John

10:3:5) Yeshua told us that a true shepherd knows His sheep by name and the people know their shepherd's voice. In other words, they recognize God speaking through their rabbi/pastor and they follow him. Loyalty

to a shepherd is becoming increasingly rare. I hear many say “God speaks to me directly,” as if to say they don’t need a rabbi/pastor. Although God does speak to individuals, He gives confirmation through rabbis and pastors. Nevertheless, today a lot of people avoid their shepherd if they know they are going astray by making a bad decision. If you find yourself avoiding your pastor/rabbi for counsel, stop and ask yourself why?

6. Shepherds number their flocks – (Jer 33:13). Again, a shepherd knows the sheep entrusted to Him by God and he numbers them. God appoints shepherds in our lives, yet some people jump out of the sheep pen where wolves are always lurking. It is sad when a sheep strays from the flock and the shepherd. We shepherds go after them, but we can’t force them come back. The wonderful lesson of the prodigal son is that you don’t have to be too proud to return home to your shepherd and to the flock. Just repent and come back. Everyone will rejoice!

7. Shepherds find secure pasture for their flocks – (1 Chr 4: 39-41). A few

years ago, just before I was to receive chemotherapy for leukemia, our realtor called and told us somebody else was interested in the building we were looking to purchase. I didn’t know if I would be alive to buy the building, but we knew our flock needed a home and my wife had faith, so we offered full price. We purchased a building and God turned it into a beautiful synagogue, with land and even a creek and a big sycamore tree! After catching some teens climbing on the roof of our fellowship hall and skateboarding down our steep driveway, we put a large fence around the property with the help of a generous man. We had to install a fence in order to protect our children and provide a secure environment for our congregants. Now our children play outside with abandon, and we adults don’t worry as much about their safety.

8. A good shepherd is faithful – (Genesis 31:38-40). A good shepherd cares for his flock and remains with them until God replaces him with another shepherd.

9. A good shepherd is fearless – (1 Sam 17:34-36). Yeshua said “*The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep,*” **John 10:11**. Ultimately Jesus was talking about dying for our sins, but an earthly shepherd stands up and defends his flock. He does not cower and run away.

10. A good shepherd is unselfish – (Luke 15:3-6) As I mentioned earlier, a good rabbi/pastor will go after a sheep that strays and try to bring them back. Though not always successful, we have a duty to try. A rabbi/pastor must be available when

needed by a member of the flock, but there is a balance. If he gives too much he can burn out. So the shepherd needs to know when to rest and go up on the mountain like Yeshua. Others can visit the sick at times and communicate with the rabbi.

11. A shepherd is considerate – (Gen 33:13, 14). A good shepherd will not drive his sheep too hard and harm them. This is a lesson in maturity. A young rabbi/pastor may be more prone to demanding people to change their ways rather than gently encouraging them in righteousness. By God’s grace and mercy we learn the signs of when a person needs a break. I have made this error when I was younger, but have sought to temper my words of correction.

12. A shepherd is believing – (Luke 2:8-20). A good shepherd

hears from the Lord and has faith to proclaim the Gospel and any message God has for the flock. That is why it is important to attend the worship service where God is calling you to go, not just where you feel like going. When you don’t show up, you might miss what God has to say to you. I have found people who attend service irregularly have a more difficult time finding God’s direction for their lives. A good shepherd also has faith to believe for the heal-

ing of the wounds of his sheep, and to believe the best for his sheep!

Conclusion:

There is much more to say about the importance of the shepherd. Yeshua/Jesus came to free His people from bondage to sin and to give us eternal life! However, I think God still uses shepherds to deliver His people. In Ezekiel 34 God promises to shepherd His people Himself and bring us back to Israel. In Jeremiah 23:4 He promises to raise up righteous shepherds for His people. Will we see another shepherd like Moses or David arise before the Shepherd King returns?

Quite possibly. One thing is for sure, God is preparing to re-gather the Hebrew people, including the Messianic community, and willing Christians to the land of Israel. This epic deliverance will certainly need the qualities of another great shepherd to organize and care for such a multitude.

Shalom,
Rabbi Joe

Note: We are not associated in any way with the “Shepherding Movement” of the 70s. This teaching is strictly a biblical teaching about Jesus the good shepherd and the calling of a shepherd as is illustrated in the Bible.



A Father's Day Message

I recently began a series on the life of King David when a thought occurred to me: "What if King Saul had embraced young David and loved him as a father?" What would that have meant for Saul's Kingdom, for Israel, and for the world?

As a son myself and the father of two young sons, I believe that what most boys and men want is a father's unconditional love. The Apostle Paul said, *"Though we have countless tutors in Messiah, yet you would not have many fathers;" 1 Corinthians 4:15.* Paul goes on to say that through the Gospel he became a spiritual father. He then exhorts us to be imitators of him. A teacher may bring instruction, but may not show love or intimate care for his student. I think there has always been an abundance of bible teachers, but few spiritual fathers. Perhaps David needed to spend thirteen years running from Saul like a dog to learn humility and total dependence on God, as well as skills that would save his life. It seems David's greatest earthly desire was simply the reciprocal love of a man of God, the love of a mentor, the love of a spiritual father.

The Waste:

Is it possible to calculate the cost of moving armies to hunt David for years on end? In today's currency it would be tens of millions of dollars at least! There is no way to calculate the waste of emotional energy pent up in anger and hatred Saul had for David. What if Saul had channeled all that energy and effort into positive things? What if he had accepted David for the brilliant general and warrior that he was? What if Saul had not been threatened by David's great gifts, but instead had embraced the lad and encouraged him, rewarding him for his successes, honoring him for his achievements and equipping him for growth into full adulthood and service?

Senator Marco Rubio is perhaps one of the youngest men to ever become a US Senator. Now he is running for President of the United States in his 30's. He may not win, but few among us can say we have accomplished as much as this young man at such an early age. I wonder if Rubio had a few helping hands along the way?

If King Saul had not been jealous of David, but had embraced him as Israel's champion, imagine what Saul could have accomplished for his kingdom. David was fiercely loyal to King Saul and determined to serve him. The truth is that the fledgling nation would have loved Saul for embracing David, the slayer of Goliath! Accepting David would not have detracted from Saul's power and glory as king, rather magnified it. Furthermore, David would have attained what he probably craved the most, the King's approval; he would have had a spiritual father.

Love is always the more excellent way:

In our generation, children who are parented in an atmosphere of love and cared for without strife and abuse present, are more likely to grow into emotionally stable adults, and also more likely to be good parents. I have witnessed the ravages of divorce on families far too many times. Divorce and abuse (physical or emotional) almost certainly bear rotten fruit and

troubled children who often need counseling, turn to drugs or other vices to escape their unhappiness. Divorce impoverishes families; it destroys wealth, causes homes to be sold, money to be spent on lawyers and is very destructive emotionally to all involved.

The Bible says, *"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose," Romans 8:28.* David was predestined to become king of Israel with or without Saul's fatherly affection.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that emotionally speaking, David would have been a healthier leader and father had he been able to serve a loving king. I am also convinced that he still would have become king in spite of Jonathan's (Saul's son) right to succession. I think David would have been a better husband and father and not seen the trouble he had with his own children, Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, and others. Had Saul been a spiritual father to him instead of an enemy, Israel would have been unstoppable.

Consider Paul in contrast to Saul. He was a loving spiritual father to his many children in the Lord. He had conflict, but was nevertheless eager to mentor and raise up spiritual giants who could surpass him, a testament to his success. Father's Day is upon us. This would be a good time to search our hearts and ask whether we as fathers are walking in the loving spirit of Paul or the bitter and fearful spirit of Saul? If we sow now as loving fathers, what eternal blessing to this world could our labor bring?

Have a happy and blessed Father's Day!

Love,
Joe and Dawn



In Concert
Ted Pearce
July 16th 7:00pm

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