

April 24-30, 2023

John 7–10

“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

Summary: *John 7. Jesus’ kinsmen do not believe—He teaches His Father’s doctrine and proclaims His divine sonship—Truth may be known through obedience—Jesus offers living water to all people—The people have various opinions concerning Him.*

John 8. The woman taken in adultery is brought before Christ—Christ is the Light of the world—He again proclaims that He is the Messiah—The true children of Abraham believe in Christ—Jesus says, Before Abraham was I, Jehovah.

John 9. Jesus, on the Sabbath, heals a man born blind—The Jews accuse Him of Sabbath violation—He lectures them on spiritual blindness.

John 10. Jesus is the Good Shepherd—He gained power over death from His Father—He promises to visit His other sheep—He proclaims, I am the Son of God.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How important is light?

The great “I Am” is the “Light.” Every bit of light is a reflection

of Him. That light is all around us. The teachings and traditions of light may be ways of better recognizing Him. “Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space . . .”

(Doctrine & Covenants 88:7-12) A biblical holiday connected with lights is *Sukkoth*. Along with *Pesah* (Passover,) it is one of the holy (and happy) times that the Children of Israel were given to remind

them of being delivered from bondage. Remembering that one of the names of the “Deliverer” is “Light,” it becomes apparent that most often the term “light” is a repetitive symbol of the Lord. Sukkoth with its lights is also the time to remember Solomon’s dedication of the temple, the Lord’s house. The temple became the symbol that set the people apart from others. They and their temple were to be an “ensign” to the nations. That ensign was a “light” to the world in its day and would be so again in latter-days.

How does “coming to the light” better help me to understand true proselyting?

“The same Prophets who have contemplated and described the . . . reunion of the tribes of Israel . . . have also predicted that, in connection with all these preparations, a new dispensation should be manifested, a new covenant established, “A standard” for the nations, “An Ensign” for the people. In short, “Swift Messengers,” “Teachers,” Prophets would be commissioned, revelations be manifested, and a new organization be developed, fitted to the times, and with the

principles and laws adapted to the reorganization, order, and government of a renovated world.” (Parley P. Pratt, *Key to Theology*, Ch.9, Pg.76 - Pg.77) It was the practice to light fires on mountain tops at every Sukkoth holiday. Once seen by a distant village, they would light fires on their mountain tops, and in that way the lights spread throughout the diaspora of Jewish communities, mountain to mountain. Later, in 164 B.C.E. when the success of Judas the Maccabee in taking the temple out of the grasp of the Selucid occupiers was celebrated, the practice of lighting candles (eight days of Hanukkah) expanded to lighting fires on mountain tops again. “It is further related that this eight-day dedication ceremony [Hanukkah] was actually celebrated as a “belated” Sukkot holiday. (Sukkot had not been held that year due to the fighting against the Greeks.) Thus, during the rededication of the Temple, the people came to the Temple in joy and thanksgiving, observed the precept of taking the lulav (palm branch) and rejoiced with lights and illuminations in the Temple. After this, Hanukkah came to be called the “Festival of Lights.” Interestingly, the rededication of the Temple and the re-celebration of Sukkot paralleled the consecration of Solomon's Temple, which was also an eight-day dedication ceremony held on the festival of Sukkot.”

How was light, music, and water used in ancient temple worship?

“In the days of the Temple, each day during the last six *hol ha-mo'ed* days of the festival [of *Sukkoth*] (though not on the Sabbath), the priests used to fill a golden flagon with water drawn from the beautiful spring of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount, and carry it up the hill for a ceremony at the altar. This ceremony was called *Simhat Bet ha-Sho'evah* (the joy of the water-drawing). According to the Mishnah, whoever failed

to witness this ceremony in his lifetime “never witnessed real joy.” Golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that “there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the *Bet ha-Sho'evah*. “Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises. And countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments, on the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Another interesting fact about lights is the ancient practice of announcing the new moon by lighting bonfires on mountain tops. This is significant because the biblical calendar and seasonal holidays that had eternal and religious symbolism had to be accurately calculated by the rotation of the moon and the sun. “Originally the New Moon was proclaimed by the Sanhedrin, the High Court assembled in Jerusalem, after testimony by reliable witnesses that they had actually seen the new crescent; they then “sanctified” the moon. Bonfires were lit on the Mount of Olives to inform the whole nation. As soon as these beacons were seen, others were lit on hilltops by waiting scouts, and so the word was spread over the entire land and in parts of the Diaspora. Later, the Samaritans began to light misleading beacons and word had to be sent by messenger. In the fourth century C.E. the sages established a uniform permanent calendar, based on astronomical calculation, in force to this day.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

When do Jews diminish lights?

When the temple was destroyed, a mourning holiday, *Tish'ah Be-av*, was instituted and on that holiday lights are diminished. “*Tish'a Be-av*, (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of *Av*, usually falling

within the first week of August) is the traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. It is the culmination of the three weeks of mourning that start on the 17th of *Tammuz*. On *Tish'ah be-Av* in the year 586 B.C.E., the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar stormed the great Temple built by Solomon, turned its marbled columns, and gilded rooms into a useless pile of rubble and exiled Jerusalem's inhabitants." "This tragic day has therefore been set aside as a time of sadness for all Jews, who are required to fast the whole day and observe most of the mourning rites which apply in the case of a death in the family, such as not wearing shoes or sandals made of leather. At the evening service in the synagogue, all decorations are removed from the ark, the lights are dimmed, a few candles are lit, and the whole congregation sits on low benches or on the floor listening in hushed silence to the mournful notes of Eikhah, the Book of Lamentations written by the prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to the destruction of the first Temple." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

What are capital offences punishable by death?

Desecrating the temple was a capital crime with the penalty of death. Capital crimes included adultery, murder, blasphemy, and rebellion of children against their parents. "Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** The biblical method of execution was stoning. A truer understanding of the process of stoning would give added

insight to the New Testament account of a woman brought to Jesus. The procedure included causing death by precipitating the convicted person over a cliff (an abandoned stone quarry could be an execution site). That part included the participation of one of the witnesses. The second witness threw or placed the "first stone" on the body in a process of burying the convicted. The stoning was more a disrespectful burying, depriving the convicted of a mourning chamber and a burial chamber. The following explanation adds to the comments made previously about the procedure of stoning.) "Our Rabbis taught: Whence do we know that [the execution] was accomplished by hurling down? Scripture states, And he shall be cast down. And whence the necessity of stoning? Scripture states, He shall be stoned. And whence do we know that both stoning and hurling down [were employed]? From the verse, he shall surely be stoned or thrown down. And whence do we know that if he died through being hurled down, it is enough? Scripture states or cast down. Whence do we know the same procedure is to be followed for [all subsequent] generations? **(Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 45a)** It should be noted that the Hebrew rendition of stoning including "hurling" or "laying on hands;" to "cast" or "throw" down is not as recognizable in the English King James Translation of **Exodus 19:13** and **Leviticus 24:14**.

How do I grasp that Biblical punishment was based on the crime – not the person?

Now, consider the story of the woman brought to Jesus. Wisely and compassionately, the Judge of Israel, our Advocate with the Father, the Atoner for our sins reminded the Pharisees that they had a legal system. In effect, was He saying, "Where are your witnesses? What would cause you to come to me when you have a procedure for the witnesses to do

their legal duty?" Yet, at the same time, He had them examine their own lives (and lusts). "Where is the witness – without sin, let him cast the first stone?" When they all left, Jesus, the ultimate Judge and Advocate, said, "Neither do I accuse thee, go thy way and sin no more."

Hopelessness and darkness were turned to lighted hope. She was saved. "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:9-12) Jehovah is His name. Salvation is what He provides. Jehovah means "I Am" - and "I Am" is so sacred that it is not repeated; even modern Hebrew does not have a first-person conjugation of "I am." The shortened version of Jehovah is "Jeho" and connected to the abbreviation of "salvation" it is pronounced Jeho-Shua. By the time Jeho-shua was transliterated into Greek and then into Latin, it became pronounced "Je-sus," and in English, Jesus. He is the "I AM" who "saves."

How may I fulfill being "sent?"

The Hebrew word for "sent" is "*shiloach*." Water emanating from the Gihon spring filled a pool of water was called the "Pool of Sent," or "Pool of *Shiloach*." The "living" (spring) water was sent through Hezekiah's tunnel to be collected and stored for the people's use. The name of the collection pool has been transliterated into the "Pool of *Shiloam*." The Apostle John gives us beautiful poetry and insight as he relates the significant way Jesus

healed the blind man. Jesus sent a blind man to the "Pool of Sent" to receive sight by washing his eyes in living water. The "Fountain of Living Waters," giving sight to the blind man, was sent from God to give us all sight. As I contemplate this story, I can just see a humble, believing couple saying to that blind man, "We'll take you to the pool," (after all, he couldn't see the way). "The Jewish attitude toward blindness is one of special concern, since blind people are naturally helpless in many ways, and therefore more likely to be exploited or hurt. The *Torah* commands: "Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind," and this commandment is taken to include not only those who are actually blind, but also those who lack understanding of a particular matter. In other words, one must not trick a person who may be "blind" to what he is doing. The Bible also mentions blindness in reference to people who were blind, among them the patriarch Isaac, as well as Eli, the high priest, and Samson." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What has been done to assist the blind?

"Judaism regards a blind person as perfectly normal, and the only restrictions placed upon him are due to the limitations of his physical disability. At one time it was believed that a blind person should not fulfil certain religious duties such as being called up to the Torah reading, conducting the service, acting as judge or reading the *Shema*. However, all these opinions were later refuted, and it is now accepted that a blind man may practice Judaism like any other Jew. He cannot, however, perform those acts which specifically involve reading a text such as the actual reading of the *Torah* or *Megillah* since these must be read from a *kosher* Hebrew text and not by heart or from braille." "Because Israel is a country whose inhabitants have immigrated from all parts of the world, including many

backward nations, there is a larger percentage of blind people in Israel than in other Western countries. Nevertheless, in Israel today, blind people can lead a normal life thanks to the fine educational institutions and numerous agencies and associations which aid in their job placement, training, and rehabilitation. In addition, they can enjoy a vast amount of literature, biblical, secular, Hebrew and foreign, which has been printed in Hebrew braille. (Strangely, Hebrew braille is written from left to right, like English writing.) "Moreover, Israel has developed two machines to further aid blind people. The Transicon is a type of computer which electronically photographs printed material and converts it into braille script. Thus, a blind man does not have to wait for a particular book to be printed in braille but can read whatever he pleases. The second machine, the Philapbraille, is a typewriter which produces whatever is typed both in ordinary script and braille, so that the blind person typing may check his own work." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

In Orthodox Judaism, how to corneal transplants differ from other donor procedures?

In Israel, where the Orthodox Jews adamantly wish to impose their religious interpretation and standards, autopsies and dissection of bodies or body parts for study are openly disdained. Yet, corneal transplants are encouraged in order to save blindness. "Although the objections that apply to autopsies also apply to dissection for the purpose of anatomical study, enough people bequeath their bodies for this purpose so that religious opposition has been confined largely to autopsies, despite the fact that the *Halakhic* permission for such bequests is doubtful. Similarly, most rabbinical authorities permit autopsies in the case of violent or accidental death or where crime is suspected. Most of those who oppose autopsies make an exception in the case

of corneal transplants which restore sight to a blind person. In this specific instance one rabbi stated that the deceased would consider it an honor for his eye to be so used. The permissibility of organ banks is less likely in view of the rule in Jewish law that all mortal remains must ultimately be buried." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What can I understand from the imagery of a shepherd?

In addition to the Lord's names of sight, light and living waters, the imagery of the shepherd is a powerful lesson of the Savior's role in our salvation. His prophets had one major role, to witness of Him, the Lamb of God. "Moses, fleeing from Egypt, came across Jethro's daughters being ill-treated by local shepherds at a well in Midian. He saved them and watered their flocks for them. In gratitude Jethro gave Moses one of his daughters, Zipporah, as his wife and appointed him shepherd of his flocks (**Exodus 2:16-21; 3:1**). Following this incident, he went to work for the priest as a shepherd and married one of his daughters, Zipporah. Thus Moses, like King David, a leader of the Israelites after him, spent his days tending flocks of sheep." "With the coming of the Messiah, Jews will come home to Jerusalem, the everlasting city. "He that scattered Israel will gather him as a shepherd his flock." "A troublemaker" is what King Ahab called Elijah. The Bible calls him Elijah the *Tishbite*, and many people have called him the first of the great prophets of Israel. Elijah was not a professional prophet, but a simple shepherd who felt himself called upon by God to help the Jewish people turn away from evil. He answered this call by setting out on a life-long prophetic mission." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Amos, a shepherd, became a prophet and another shepherd, David, became a king. David's reign provided the best kingdom Israel ever had. The greatest archaeological treasure, the Dead Sea Scrolls, was found by

shepherds. Most important, are the images which connect with His title as the Lamb of God. The modern Jewish *Tallith* (prayer shawl) is a garment like that used in the ancient temple. The one worn over the clothing is usually made from wool. It may have a significance in wrapping or covering ourselves in the Lamb of God. The word for lamb is *Taleh* and a female lamb is a *Talitha*, hence the name of the garment - *Tallith*. It has markings that denote its religious meaning. "In medieval France, it was customary for the groom to cover the bride's head with his tallit as a symbol of sheltering her; and in modern-day Israel, for weddings of soldiers on active duty, it is not unusual to see a huppah constructed of a *tallit* supported by four rifles held by friends of the bride and groom. Generally, the huppah is erected inside the synagogue or the hall where the wedding is to take place, but among Orthodox Jews, the preferred custom is to erect the huppah outside, or at least in a spot open to the sky, underneath the stars, because of God's assurance to Abraham that He would make his descendants "as numerous as the stars of the heavens." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What can I learn from practices regarding leading sheep in Israel?

The setting is in Galilee, on the Mount of Beatitudes. A farmhouse used to be there with more than a hundred sheep nearby. The boy shepherd leads them out every morning and returns in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year's flock. The shepherd usually has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it's time to move on, and that's when the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing noise alerts the other sheep, and

then like a wave they begin to follow the others. The shepherd's model is similar to an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple, the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then gather to follow the priests to participate in the ritual. Additionally, I have noticed how the shepherds in Israel develop a language for their sheep. The grunts, whistles, and sounds are recognized by the flock. I have also seen two shepherds meet on the hillsides as they lead their sheep. The shepherds stop, chat, and typically make a small fire and prepare a hot drink. In the meantime, their sheep begin to mingle. You can imagine the ownership confusion that might follow. Yet, when one shepherd departs, he simply begins talking and making his "sounds," and his sheep follow him. "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice . . ." (*Psalms 95:7*) "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (*John 10:4*) "And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed." (*Alma 5:60*)

"How am I able to differentiate the voice of the Good Shepherd from a stranger?"

Can any person answer this question? I can. It is very easy. To every philosopher upon the earth, I say, your eye can be deceived, so can mine; your ear can be deceived, so can mine; the touch of your hand can be deceived, so can mine; but

the Spirit of God filling the creature with revelation and the light of eternity, cannot be mistaken--the revelation which comes from God is never mistaken. When an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that, the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost light springs up within them, and they see and understand for themselves. This is the way the Gospel should be

preached by every Elder in Israel . . .”
(Discourses of Brigham Young, Pg.431)
While visiting Israel, one of my guests, Lorin Moench, a sheep rancher, pointed out the significant difference between shepherds and shepherders. Sheep herding is usually driving the flock. In Israel, he noticed, the shepherd leads the flock.