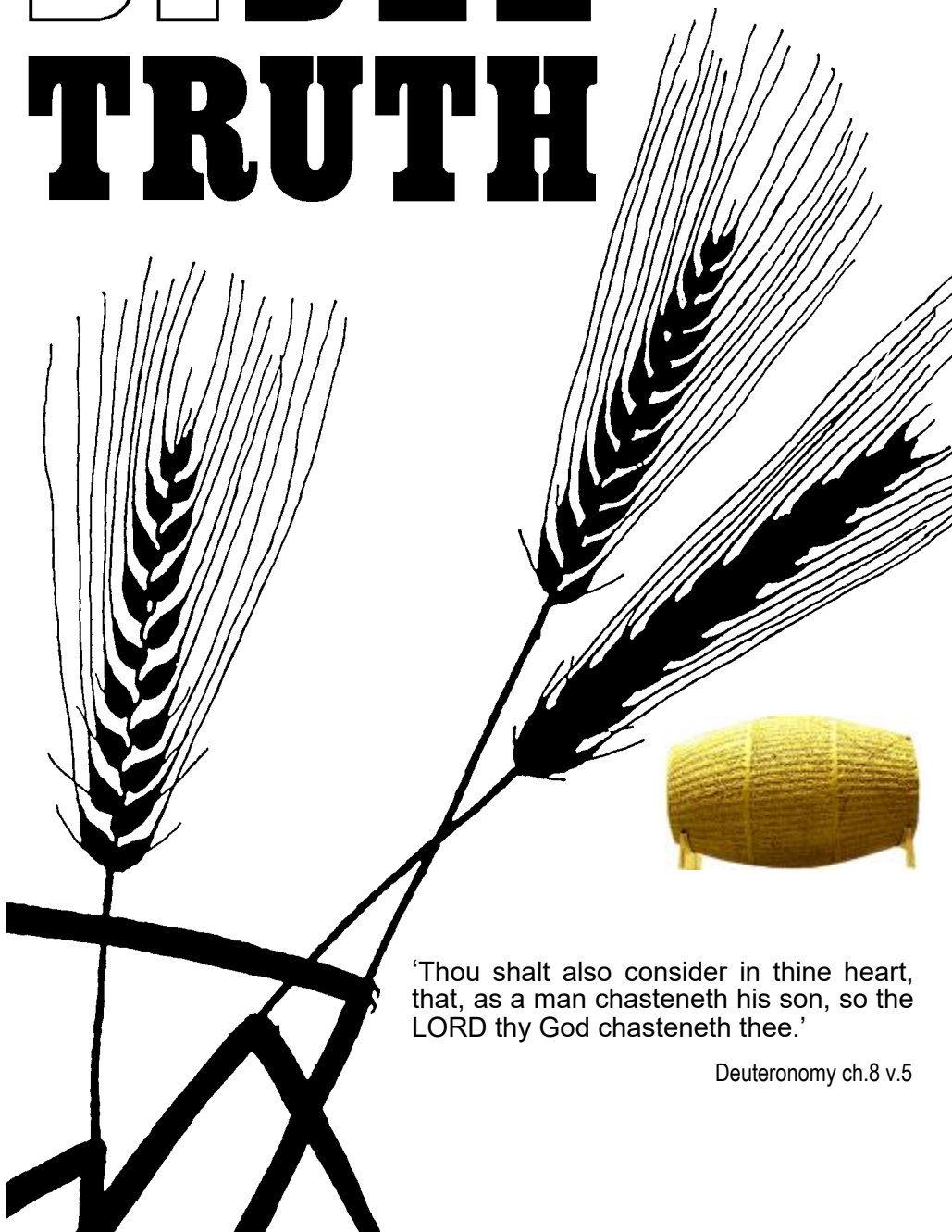


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‘Thou shalt also consider in thine heart,
that, as a man chasteneth his son,
so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.’

Deuteronomy ch.8 v.5

The Lord's Other Sheep

by Pastor Jory Steven Brooks



In the gospel of John we read,

‘As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd’.

John ch.10 vv 15-16

John Henry Newman, in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p.230, says,

‘Of all the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, there are none more deeply engraven in the mind of the Church, none more dear to her than these. This is one of the Divine sayings in which there is so much of truth and love, that we seem able to do little more than to record it and ponder on it, to express it by symbols, and to draw from it a multitude of peaceful and heavenly thoughts. Let us, then, consider the surpassing and peculiar goodness of the One True Shepherd’.

Yes, let us ponder these important words Christ spoke on His fourth and last visit to Judea before the crucifixion.

Who and where are these prophesied people our Lord spoke of and why are they called ‘other sheep’? Some say that this simply refers to the Christian Church that would be established at Calvary. Yet speaking within the Jewish fold, Christ said, ‘other sheep I have [not ‘will have’], which are not of this [Judean] fold’.

The sheep He spoke of were already in existence somewhere in lands outside of Palestine before the establishment of the Christian Church, and it was these sheep who would hear His voice and believe.

Dr E.W. Bullinger in the Companion Bible clarifies the meaning of this passage, 'another of the same kind of sheep I have, which are not out of this fold'. This would indicate that they were Israelites, 'the same kind of sheep' who were not located in Palestine.

The Modern Literal Version translates, 'not of this pen', similar to the Good News Bible, 'not in this sheep pen'. The pen or enclosure the translators indicated was the old land of Canaan.

Foreign language translations support this interpretation. The *Luther Bible* of 1545, a German translation by Reformation scholar Martin Luther says, 'nicht aus diesem Stalle', i.e. 'not of this stall or location'. The Spanish *Sagradas Escrituras* (Sacred Scripture) says, 'no son de este corral', literally, 'are not of this corral or enclosure'.

The *Orthodox Jewish Bible* says, 'not of this mikhla (fold, enclosure)'.

John's gospel tells us,

'And one of them, named Caiaphas, ... being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus ... should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad'. John ch.11 vv 49-52

The Jewish Pharisees referred to these other sheep in John ch.7 vv 33-35.

'Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?'

The word 'Gentiles', is an English replacement for the original Greek word 'Hellen' meaning a Grecian or resident of Greece. Israelites had migrated westward in early times, whether for trade, colonization, or safety, across the Mediterranean to Greece and beyond.

The word, 'dispersed' is a translation of the original Greek word, 'Diaspora', defined by *Strong's* Concordance as, 'dispersion, that is, (specifically and concretely) the Israelites resident in Gentile countries - which are scattered abroad'. The *Amplified Bible* translates, '... Jews that are scattered in the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks'.

However, the Jewish Diaspora occurred much later at the time of the Roman conquest of Judah over four decades after Christ's time. Dr Heinrich Meyer adds, 'The Jews outside Palestine are not intended, as they form part of the fold of the Jewish theocracy, to which the words *ektes aules tantes* refer, and within which Jesus Himself lived and spake'. Robertson's Word Pictures notes that the term, ' "other sheep" clearly indicates sheep, not goats but "not of this fold" '.

Therefore, the 'other sheep' were not Jews of the two-tribe House of Judah, yet they were Israelites, 'the same kind of sheep', indicating that they were of the other branch of the covenant people, the House of Israel. This branch, comprising ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, had an earlier Diaspora, or migration, westward across the Mediterranean that began with the Assyrian conquest of Palestine in the eighth century BC. Additional evidence that they were not Jews is that Christ said they would hear His voice and constitute the core of the Christian Church.

Eighteenth-century biblical expositor, John Gill, wrote that these other sheep, 'were scattered about in the several parts of the world'. Many Old Testament prophets testified of the dispersion of the ten tribes of the House of Israel.

Ezekiel says the following.

'Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.'

ch.11 v.16

'And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: ... '

ch.36 v.19

Amos testified,

'For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth'.

ch.9 v.9

Hosea recorded,

'My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations'.

ch.9 v.17

However, there is another important point to be made here. Is this biblical passage really referring to any and all of God's people Israel whose physical location was simply outside of the 'fold' of Canaan? Many think so, for Christ said,

'... them also I must bring...and there shall be one fold ...' .

John ch.10 v.16

However, the word 'fold' is a misleading translation of the original Greek word, 'agagein' properly meaning 'flock'. *The Pulpit Commentary* explains, 'They are scattered abroad now, but eternal Love, by assuming Shepherd-wise relations with them, determines not to bring them to one place or enclosure — to express such a thought we should have had, not ἀγαγεῖν, but οὐναγαγεῖν (John ch.11 v.52) or προάγαγεῖν — but to bring them into personal relations with himself. They shall become one flock, one Shepherd. The false English translation of 'fold,' should be specially noticed. If our Lord had meant to convey the idea of the rigid enclosure into which all the scattered sheep should be gathered, he would have used the word αὐλή. The word ποιμνῆ is, however, studiously chosen. The error has done grievous injury.

Why does it matter whether the Greek word used by Christ means 'fold' or 'flock'? Our Lord was actually not making a distinction by location (Canaan versus expatriates) but by identity: Israel versus Judah. Jesus' focus was on people, not places. It is important to understand that He was specifically referring to Ephraim-Israel, the ten tribes, not just to members of either house located away from Canaan, and He was making a point that it would specifically be the ten tribe house that would be distinguished by faith in Him.

Vincent's Word Studies also confirms this: 'The idea is not bringing them together (as οὐναγάγη, John ch.11 v.52), or conducting them to one place, but assuming the guidance'. The gathering of the dispersed and lost ten-tribe house of Israel, in contrast to the two tribes of the house of Judah, was not a physical return into one fold in one place (i.e. Canaan), but a spiritual gathering or guidance into New Covenant faith in Christ.

Jesus proclaimed, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matthew ch.15 v.24), and came 'to seek and to save

that which was lost' (Luke ch.19 v.10), while He addressed the Jews of the House of Judah and plainly told them, 'ye are not of my sheep' (John ch.10 v.26). The word, sheep, was a biblical symbol or identification often used specifically for the House of Israel in both the Old and New Testaments.

This error of misunderstanding has indeed done grievous injury. Churches teach that all twelve tribes, both Israelite houses, returned after the Babylonian exile and that today's Jewish people constitute all of Israel in the world today. Yet the Jewish people have not fulfilled the prophecies and covenant promises that Israel was to accomplish during these latter days, the Church Age. Israel was to be 'a company of nations' (Genesis ch.35 v.11), 'many nations' (Genesis ch.17 vv 5-6). They were to carry the word of the Lord to the ends of the earth (Isaiah ch.49 v.6). These and many other covenant promises were not fulfilled by the two-tribe branch, the House of Judah.

The common teaching today is that Israel is limited to the Jewish people, and lost their Abrahamic covenant promises, either temporarily or permanently, due to rejection of Christ. Yet the Abrahamic Covenant was unconditionally given, based upon Abraham's prior faith and obedience (Genesis ch.22 vv 15-18). God swore by Himself that Abraham's descendants would receive these promises unconditionally. If the covenant promises were lost, postponed or abolished, then God broke His Word!

The Numerical Bible notes, 'These were His own sheep, but not all the sheep in the Jewish fold; and this is the strange thing that now becomes manifest, that though He who has come is the Shepherd of Israel, as a whole that knows His voice.' We need to understand that the ten-tribe House of Israel were specifically the 'other sheep' who would hear His voice while Judah, the Jewish people, rejected Him.

The Intersarsity Press Biblical Background Commentary says, 'The regathering of [ten-tribe] Israel in the end was one of the basic hopes of ancient Judaism, reflected in writings and prayers'. For centuries Jews prayed for the return of the lost tribes of the House of Israel, expecting a physical return. Yet the more important return was Ephraim-Israel's coming to faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
