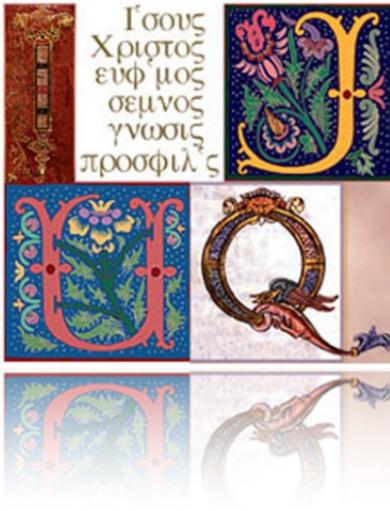

The Lost Sheep



**WAES
HAEL**

Book seventeen

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2019



I AM NOT UTTERING A FINAL PRONOUNCEMENT NOR EXPRESSING AN ESTABLISHED DOCTRINE, BUT I AM RESEARCHING TO THE LIMIT OF MY ABILITY, I AM DISCUSSING THE MEANING OF THE SCRIPTURES AND I DO NOT CLAIM TO HAVE UNDERSTOOD THAT MEANING WHOLLY OR PERFECTLY, ON MANY POINTS I HAVE A PRELIMINARY IDEA.

ALL BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS ARE TAKEN FROM THE AV “KING JAMES VERSION”

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Introduction

Jesus uses the metaphor ¹ of “a lost sheep” for an Israelite who has moved far from his roots, i.e., he is not living under a Covenant with HaShem. The metaphor “lost sheep” applied to non-covenantal Judeans only, not to Gentiles, nor to Samaritans. Jesus told His Apostles not to go into the way of the Gentiles nor the cities of the Samaritans. Gentiles were not Jews, Samaritans were under another

¹ A metaphor is a figure of speech that equates two things in such a way that the thing being referred to indirectly takes on the character of the thing mentioned. For example: Jesus said: “(you) be wise as serpents” meaning you should behave like a snake which scurries away from danger when it hears an enemy approaching.

Covenant. The 'Lost Sheep' were free to listen to Jesus.

The Metaphor of "Lost Sheep"

"But he answered and said, **I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" Matthew 15:24, KJV.

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But **go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 10:5-7, KJV.

In this story which we call “The Lost Sheep,” our teachers understand the sheep to be a metaphor for a human who has not yet been saved. Jesus is often portrayed in pictures as the one who brings home the sheep i.e., the one who saves the “lost” person. This is not a story about salvation in the sense that Evangelicals teach, it is about being MADE free by listening to the voice of Jesus.

Pope Francis said: “Don’t proselytize; respect others’ beliefs. “We can inspire others through witness so that one grows together in communicating. But the worst thing of all is religious proselytism, ... The church grows by attraction, not proselytizing,” the Pope said.”

My pious opinion is that Jesus wants to teach us that a sheep may be freed from the clutches of the Pharisees. Usually the ‘lost sheep’ was a metaphor for people who were considered to be unclean in the community because of their menial jobs, their sickness, their deformities. They had been abandoned, no longer welcome to worship HaShem. The Pharisees taught that their condition was a punishment for disobeying HaShem. And the Pharisees were required by Law to treat these sinners badly in order to support HaShem’s condemnation.

Before Jesus came, =these disparaged people had no one to turn to. Some of them heard His voice, either directly or via the Spirit.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And **I give unto them eternal life; and they shall**

never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.
John 10:27-29, KJV.

Jesus uses the metaphor of “a lost sheep” when speaking to the Pharisees so as not to be obvious about what he was going to do, which was to rescue those sheep that once had belonged to the Pharisees.

Before we go any further, think about this: was that sheep “lost” by the owner? Or did that sheep escape from the wilderness, perhaps to save its own life? For it is sure that the 99 sheep left in the wilderness would eventually be killed and eaten. Did that one sheep know what was coming up? When Jesus suggested to the owner

of the 99 sheep that the Pharisee would naturally go in search of the lost sheep, he was not saying that this would be a good thing for the sheep. He said that the owner would be joyful if he caught the sheep and brought it back to the fold, because a sheep was worth something, either to sell, or as a sacrifice at the Temple.

And consider this: the Pharisee's 99 sheep are in the wilderness, they are not in a safe place. Being in the wilderness is a metaphor for being uncertain about God - the spiritual condition of a man who is losing his faith. So, the Pharisees have led their people (sheep) into the wilderness, a condition in which they are spiritually confused.

Jesus warned the Pharisees that they had deliberately closed the gate to heaven to their people and they refused to enter the kingdom themselves, nor would they let others in.

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But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (Mt 23:13).

Jesus is telling us through this story that those in the fold under the control of the Pharisees, can be saved from death by escaping from the wilderness of uncertainty about God, with the hope that Jesus will find them before the Pharisees catch them. And when found by Jesus they will be made truly free.

Jesus is overjoyed when someone comes to him who has been estranged from Judaism and ostracized by the ruling elite (no longer under

the Covenant) and Jesus will not give that person back to the Pharisees.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Now consider the situation of this story of the lost sheep. This story is told by The Master and directed towards the Pharisees and Scribes who are the teachers of Law. The Master is trying to explain why he spends his time with sinners. He says: the repentance of any sinner, ² is a joyful experience shared by those in the kingdom of heaven. He compares that joy to the kind of joy that a Pharisee might feel on recovering a lost sheep. Let's read the story.

² Repentance is a way of life called Teshuva in Judaism. One lives this life to find God.

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Then drew near unto him all the **publicans and sinners** for to hear him. And the **Pharisees and scribes** murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man **of you**, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine **in the wilderness**, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was

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lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance (Lu 15:1-7).

There is more to this story than we have been told in children's Sunday school. Here in this story it tells that the Pharisee³ recovers the lost sheep. But, in our Christian art we often show The Master carrying a sheep on his shoulders. Why does it matter who finds the lost sheep? Because if the Pharisees find the lost sheep, they will put the sheep in the fold with their 99 other sheep, and it will eventually be killed and eaten. If Jesus finds the lost sheep, he will be taken

³ The owner has 100 sheep, so he must be a Pharisee or Scribe, not a poor man.

from the Pharisees, and made free to worship
The Father.

In the Gospel of Matthew The Master says:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And **I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** My Father, **which gave them me,** is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them **out of my Father's hand.**” John 10:27-29, KJV.

The Master also calls his disciples “sheep.”
But these are sheep that have already heard His
voice.

“Behold, I send you forth as
sheep in the midst of wolves:
be ye therefore wise as

serpents, and harmless as doves. **But beware of men:** ...” Matthew 10:16, 17, KJV.⁴

The Master is warning his disciples that they must be wise as serpents [Aram. idiom: to scurry away from trouble] and they must beware of men who want to drag the “lost sheep” back into the fold of the Pharisees, because once within their fold, the Pharisees will “eat the sheep” or “sacrifice” them for the benefit of the Priests. These metaphors “eat the sheep” and “sacrifice them” refer to what happens to a man who is sucked back into the religion of the Pharisees and Scribes. They take his wealth, and use his services for the benefit of the Pharisees.

⁴ This was also Paul’s concern: that the Jerusalem Apostles would drag his “freed” converts into the fold of Judaism.

Isn't this what happens to people in many New Age churches, which are really just businesses to make the owners wealthy?

This is not what Jesus wished, for people to be drawn into a place of entertainment and false promises, and sacrificed for the owners.

In the Gospel of Thomas 5 we find this lesson from The Master.

(60) They saw a Samaritan carrying a lamb going into Judaea. He said to his disciples: Why does he carry the lamb?

*They said to him: **That he may kill it and eat it.***

This Samaritan is apparently going into Judea so that he may kill the sheep and eat it. Perhaps

⁵ The Gospel of Thomas was one of the first Gospels to be accepted in the 2nd century. It was considered Apocryphal i.e., sacred and not to be shown to the public, and so was left out of the New Testament of the 4th century.

he has stolen it and is escaping the owner? (“otherwise he will not be able to do it.”) There is a chance for the sheep to escape as long as it is alive, but once the Samaritan carries the sheep into Judea, it can be killed and eaten.

The metaphor “eat the sheep,” means to take some of the life from the man.

*He said to them: So long as it is alive he will not eat it, but if he kill it and it become a corpse. They said: Otherwise he will not be able to do it. He said to them: **You also, seek for yourselves a place within for rest, lest you become a corpse and be eaten.***

Jesus warns his disciples that they must seek for a safe haven, after He was gone. For if they did not find it, they would be captured and carried “into Judea.”

This is also a warning for us, do not let people pluck you from the hand of Jesus and carry you into Judea.

Those who have ears to hear let them hear.