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Shepherds and Teachers
4: 11d

Furthermore, He gave some people as shepherds and teachers.



The Hebrew word **shepherd** (*roeh*) evokes a most beautiful picture. From ancient times, the duties of **a shepherd** would include feeding, protecting, and guiding. Of course some **sheep** go astray on their own perilous path and need rescue. **Sha'ul** notes that **ADONAI** has equipped some within **the Body of Messiah** to fulfill the ministry of **a** spiritual **shepherd**, a vital calling since **the sheep of Yeshua** need to be watched over. The Greek syntax here makes a direct connection between **the shepherds** and **teachers**. It could even be considered one **gift**, **teaching-shepherds**, for some people. Either way, the importance of good **shepherding** and good teaching cannot be over-emphasized in the spiritual life.[163]

The **shepherd's** job was to protect his flock and guide them to good pastures with plenty of food and slow-moving, easily accessible water. If fed grass of poor quality, **the sheep** would be malnourished. If the water moved too quickly, **the sheep** would be too afraid to drink from it. Guiding **the** flock of **sheep** to a good location was an extremely important task for a **shepherd** because good pastures kept his flock healthy.

A shepherd typically carried a few items with **him** to aid **him** in his task of caring for the **sheep**. First, **he** would have a rod. The rod was a sturdy stick with a knob at one end. Sometimes the knob even had nails in it to make it a better weapon. **The shepherd** used **his** rod to protect **his sheep** from wild animals or other threats. **The shepherd** also carried a long staff. The staff was used as a walking stick for **the shepherd**, who also used it to maneuver **sheep** when needed. For further protection, **shepherds** often carried a sling, consisting of a leather pouch on a string. Placing a stone in the pouch, **a** skilled **shepherd** could fling rocky projectiles over a good distance in order to scare off or wound wild animals.

During biblical times, families in the Middle East relied upon **sheep** to provide food, wool, and **sheepskin**. Because **sheep** were so valuable, **shepherds** would stay with the flock to protect them day and night. Frequently, the youngest boy in the family served as **a shepherd** until he grew older and could do harder manual labor. **David** was **a shepherd** for **his** family, and he often used references to **shepherding** in the book of **Psalms**. One of the most well-known psalms, **Psalm 23**, describes **the Lord** as our **Great Shepherd**.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
He refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
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 overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Notable **shepherds** in the TaNaKh, besides **David**, are **Abel**, **Moses**, **Amos**, and, for a time at least, **Zechariah**. In the B'rit Chadashah, **shepherds** near Bethlehem are the ones chosen to witness the heavenly announcement of **Messiah's birth** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ar – The Shepherds and the Angels**). And **Yeshua** claims to be **the Good Shepherd** who truly cares for **His sheep** – so much so that **He** lays down **His** life for **them** (see **The Life of Christ Gu – The Good Shepherd and His Sheep**). Just as **ADONAI** provides **shepherds** to lead and care for **His** flock here on earth, so does **God** care for us. Even when life gets difficult, **God** protects us spiritually, guides us, and never leaves us. We can trust that **He** is the perfect **Shepherd**.[164]

*Dear Heavenly Father, Praise **You** for being such a wonderful **Shepherd**! **You** care so tenderly for each of **Your sheep**. What a comfort it is to know that **You** are always present, ready and willing to protect and guide me. **For God Himself has** said: **I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5c).** Life on earth gets so busy with so many necessary things to do, but **You** are never too busy to shepherd me. **You** are always right with me. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** How amazing that **You** abide with me, never leaving me but living with me!*

***Your** steadfast love is so wonderful to always be able to run to. When problems seem so huge that they seem impossible for us to solve, your love is the bedrock we can always run to. Even when **David** was being sought after to be killed by King Sha'ul and the entire army, **David** was calm and trusting in you. **He** knew that not only are **You** greater than any king and his army, **Your** love is still there in the midst of the problem. **O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You in a dry and weary land, where there is no water. . . Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. (Psalms 63:1, 3).** And just like David, we need to always trust in **Your** steadfast love – no matter what is happening, **You** are our Great, loving and powerful **Shepherd**. **You** are in control- always! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Paul declares that **if you are a teacher, use your gift in teaching (Romans 12:7a).** The meaning is simple and straightforward. *Didaskon* (teaches) refers to the act of **teaching**, and *didaskalia* (teaching) can refer to what is taught as well as to the act of **teaching** it. Both of those meanings are appropriate to this **gift**. The believer, **if you are a teacher,** is divinely **gifted** with a special ability to interpret

and present **God's** truth understandably. The primary difference between **teaching** and **prophesying** is not in content but in the distinction between the ability to proclaim and the ability to give systematic and regular instruction in **God's Word**. **The gift** of **teaching** could apply wherever **God's** truth is taught. The early Messianic community was characterized by regular **teaching (Acts 2:42)**. The Great Commission includes the command: **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations – teaching them to observe all that I commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20 NASB).** This spiritual **gift** includes features of both preaching and **teaching**.



Women have all the spiritual **gifts** that **men** have except being the sole teacher of a Messianic congregation or the sole pastor of a church. **Timothy** was the pastor of the church at **Ephesus** and addressed this issue directly (see my commentary on **Genesis Lv – Women and Spiritual Gifts**). From **his** inspired writing, it seems clear that **women** can teach other **women**, children, teenagers, and, under the authority of **their** husband, they can **teach** men (see the commentary on **Acts Cf – Priscilla and Aquila Teach Apollos**), or a mixed group as a team. A great example of **women's** ministry is Kristi McLelland's (see her teaching ministry at newlensbiblicalstudies.com). However, there are some "progressive" **women** today who are like Eve in the Garden of Eden. **ADONAI** said to her: **You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17a).** And today, **Messiah** says to these "progressive" **women**, "**You are free** to exercise any spiritual **gift** that **I** bless you with, **but you must not** be the sole teacher of a Messianic congregation or the sole pastor of a church." And like Eve, they say, "Well, if that's the one spiritual gift I can't have; then that's exactly the one I want!"