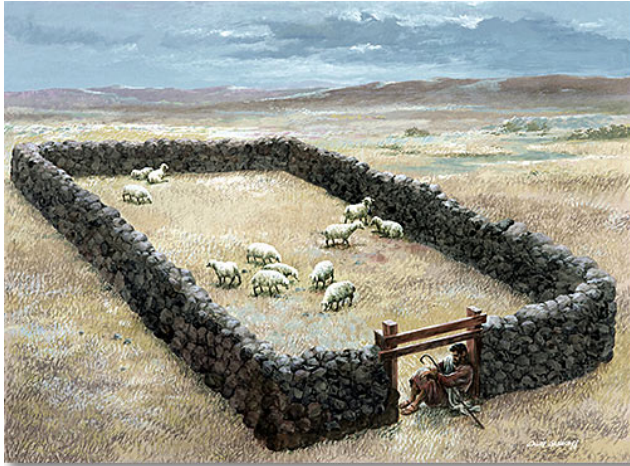


The Good Shepherd and The Sheepfold

The sheepfold is a rock wall enclosure of stacked stones that provides protection against



thieves, robbers and wolves.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.” John 10:1

The “door” of the sheepfold was a simple opening for the sheep to come in and go out. The shepherd, or his hireling, would lie in the door and guard the sheep. He would keep watch for robbers and wolves.

The shepherd has an intimate knowledge of every single sheep of his flock, to the point of naming each one. He counts them each evening as they enter the fold, and

quickly notices the absence of any of his sheep. Some shepherds do not even have to count. A shepherd in Lebanon was asked if he always counted his sheep at the end of the day. He said, “Oh, no! If you put a cloth over my eyes, and bring me any sheep and only let me put hands on its face, I could tell in a moment if it was mine or not. I can call them out one by one, by the names I have given to my fifty-one ewe sheep, and then I can pick out each ewe's lamb, and give it to the mother to suckle. I can even do it in the complete darkness!”

What if a shepherd finds one of his sheep is missing at the end of the day? He will go back out into the night, and will search and call until he finds it. If it is caught in a thicket and injured, he carries it back. If he finds it is trapped or cornered by a wild animal, he will risk his life to save it. Jesus said He will pay the ultimate price to save His sheep: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.” John 10:14-15

There is no Arab shepherd that knows his sheep, or cares for his sheep, better than Jesus knows and cares for the sheep of His flock. “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep” John 10:14. He knows the number, the names, the needs of every single sheep. Think of this: several flocks are sometimes allowed to mix. They are placed in one central sheepfold. No attempt is made to separate them as they go in the sheepfold at night. In the morning, when it is time to separate several flocks of sheep, one shepherd after another will stand up and shout out a word that is known only to his sheep. The sheep will lift their heads and begin bleating. They scramble about and follow the sound of their own shepherd’s voice. A stranger can try the very same call, but will always fail. The words of Jesus are true: “The sheep follow him, for they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him: for they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:4-5)

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep, cares for His sheep, was willing to die for His sheep. Now He calls us and we hear Him. He is always there. He leads us, corrects us, and cares for us—no matter what we face. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Ps 23:4

Adapted from an article from “Bible History Online”:
<https://www.bible-history.com/sketches/ancient/sheep-fold.html>