

## **“Woe to the Shepherds”**

By Brother Joseph Rueben Cortez

In the prophet Jeremiah's day there arose many false prophets who claimed to speak for the Mighty One, Yahuah. Jeremiah was mocked by Israel for all the sad news he kept giving them, concerning their guilty and sinful ways. It also included the sentence which would be imposed upon them for those days. As depressing as this sad news may have sounded, unfortunately it was the truth. By accepting this truth it meant Israel would have to repent, turning to Yahuah and being obedient to His word. Regrettably, they did not want to repent, so they opened up to these false prophets who easily walked right into a large and very enthusiastic audience. These arrogant men came in claiming to be true prophets of Yahuah. The message they delivered was designed to be fitting and appealing to the desires of their audience instead of being true to Yahuah's word.

These false prophets appeared to be speaking Yahuah's message, but according to His principles, they themselves were living their lives opposite to them. They were experts at watering down Yahuah's word so craftily, they would encourage these unawares listeners to disobey Yahuah's word, and Yahuah Himself. This was why by contrast, Jeremiah's message from Yahuah was unpopular, because it revealed to the people how bad they really were. So what about the leaders who were put in charge of the people? I'm talking about the "shepherds" who had been entrusted to the people's welfare. Nothing was done by them to challenge and uncover the lies that these false prophets were bringing to the people. And why?

Before continuing with Jeremiah's message, which is an important message for the shepherds even in our day and time, we will turn to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 34:1-6 to answer this vital question.

*“And the word of Yahuah came to me, saying, “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Yisra’ël, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus said the Master Yahuah to the shepherds, “Woe to the shepherds of Yisra’ël who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? “You eat the fat and you put on the wool. You slaughter the fatlings – you do not feed the flock. “You have not strengthened the weak, nor have you healed the sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back the straying, nor sought what was lost; but you have ruled them with might and harshness. “And they were scattered because there was no shepherd. And they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill. And My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” (Ezekiel 34:1-6)*

As the false prophets came in and delivered their false message, Yahuah said that the shepherds in charge of the people had slacked off by becoming selfishly caught

up in their own concerns, giving too much attention to their own needs and ideas, causing them to neglect their service to Yahuah, and they abandoned those who were depending on them. The bad shepherds were not just selfish, but they were very destructive. Instead of teaching by example, they taught by their false ideas. Acting sinfully in the people's eyes, these shepherds were destroying their flock's spiritual nourishment, by not practicing what they were preaching.

The nation's leaders were to be watchmen, but these shepherds were blind to every danger and because of this, they were unable to warn the people when danger was coming. What was to be a special privilege as a leader, to be able to offer for the good of the people turned out to be a sacrifice of the people, because of their greed. These shepherds had known the law backward, forward, and even upside down. Instead of teaching it to the people they set the law aside and became the worst of sinners. All sin is bad, but the sin that leads others astray is the worst of all. They had no compassion or respect for those they were supposed to serve. What nerve they had to ask Yahuah for help when they found themselves in trouble. The prophet Micah warned the leaders, shepherds, and false prophets of the upcoming disaster that would come upon them for teaching Yahuah's people the wrong things and allowing this corruption to continue. (See Micah 3)

History tells us that the House of Israel was finally destroyed due to the behavior of its religious leaders and the corrupting of the people. Now I ask, what has changed throughout the centuries? Do we not still see the same situation presented before the Mighty One today? Haven't false prophets delivered and continue to deliver their false message? Is it not shepherds who are in charge of the people who refuse to accept Yahuah's message of truth when presented to them. By accepting this truth, it would mean turning to the names of Yahuah and Yahushua, instead of using the words Jesus, "God, Lord, Christ," and repenting from the lies and deceptions they have been taught, such as "Christmas, Easter," and the like. An individual has to be obedient to Yahuah's every word and preach it to the people.

But you see, they are enjoying the comfort and tranquility that comes from believing and living the lie, which keeps them from being able to change or put forth the effort it takes to be obedient. The fear of these shepherds losing money or members, influences them to remain silent and this is no difference of when anyone accepts a bribe in order to look away from the truth. It is clear to see that those responsible to lead Yahuah's people down His path of truth and righteousness are the very ones responsible for exposing His people to the danger of the lies and deception which has caused the condition that we find so many assemblies in today.

Take a minute to absorb this message given by Yahuah to Jeremiah to deliver to these shepherds. This message not only applies to the shepherds in our present day and time, but it is also being fulfilled.

*“Woe to the shepherds destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares Yahuah. Therefore thus said Yahuah Elohim of Yisra'el*

*against the shepherds who feed My people, "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and have not tended them. See, I am punishing you for the evil of your deeds," declare Yahuah. "Therefore I shall gather the remnant of My flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and shall bring them back to their fold. And they shall bear and increase. "And I shall raise up shepherds over them, and they shall feed them. And they shall fear no more, nor be discouraged, nor shall they be lacking," declares Yahuah." (Jeremiah 23:1-4)*

This message has gone out to every shepherd that has ever walked this earth, and will continue to walk it until our Messiah Yahushua comes. This message is for all of the wrong teachings that have led the flock astray. It is for all of the lies, deceptions, corruptions, and bribes of these shepherds. Yahuah has commanded this harsh judgment against all of those responsible to lead His people. Yahuah has had enough and in order to fulfill all prophecy of the Messiah Yahusha's return and reign, He must start first with the remnant.

The Natsarim Assembly is being gathered from all over this world, by the hand of our Eloah Yahuah. Once completely gathered together, He will pour down His spirit and its power will be upon them. I tell you that His will is going to be done on this earth just as it is in the heavens.

Yahuah said He will bring them back to **their pasture**, back to the original state of existence. In this state, which is His truth, we will be able to graze continuously on those qualities that constitute its purity. We will be given an open door to complete the work He has assigned us and He tells us that the results will be very productive, being able to produce much fruit to the point where this world will see an abundance yield. It will progressively continue to grow and multiply naturally by His fertile truth. No longer will man elevate himself to rule over Yahuah's people, because He will personally place His own shepherds over His people. These shepherds will not only listen and pay attention to them, but they will serve them respectfully, taking charge as true caregivers as they apply the utmost care to His people. Standing readily they will develop, charting a course according to His truth and will be ready and prepared to follow it wherever Yahuah will lead them during the remaining time left before Yahushua's return.

These shepherds will be entrusted by Yahuah to share His truth and care for His people. It will be a great responsibility. How we present it and live His truth will be a deciding factor which will encourage people to either accept it or reject it. It's not going to matter if we speak this truth from a street corner, to only twenty-five people, or in a building full of listeners. It won't even matter if we teach this truth in a classroom or inside a prison. What matters is that we accurately communicate and live out the words of Yahuah's truth which we have been entrusted with. Whether we share Yahuah's truth with our family, friends, neighbors, or even a perfect stranger, they will be looking for its effectiveness in our lives. Unless it has changed us, why should they let it change them? If we are going to preach Yahuah's truth we better make sure we are living it! Amein.