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## **National Baptist Metoka and Galeda Bible Class Magazine, September 1917**

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LESSON 10.  
SEPTEMBER 2, 1917.

The Shepherd of Captive Israel.  
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MOTTO TEXT. — "Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1.)

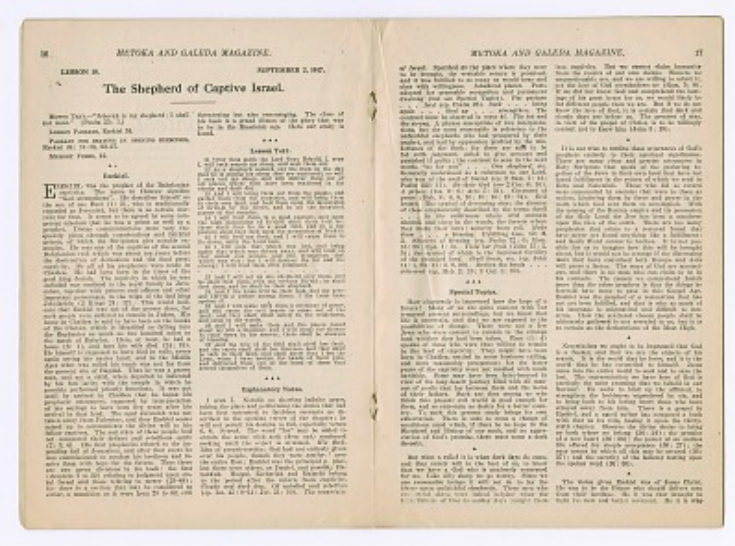
LESSON PASSAGE, Ezekiel 34.

PASSAGE FOR READING IN OPENING EXERCISES, Ezekiel 34:11-6, 23-27.

MEMORY VERSE, 12.  
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Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was the prophet of the Babylonian captivity. The name in Hebrew signifies "God strengthens". He describes himself as the son of one Buzi (1:3), who is traditionally regarded as Jeremiah, but there is no certain warrant for that. It seems to be agreed by some competent scholars that he was a priest as well as a prophet. Define communications were very frequently given through conscientious and faithful priests, of which the Scriptures give notable examples. He was one of the captives of the second Babylonian raid which was about ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the final great captivity. So all of his prophecies were made in Chaldea. He had been born in the times of the good king Josiah. The captivity in which he was included was confined to the royal family in Jerusalem, together with princes and officers and other important personages, in the reign of the bad king Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:12). This would indicate that Ezekiel was not of the poorer class, for such people were suffered to remain in Judæa. his home in Chaldea is said to have been on the banks of the Chebar, which is identified as falling into the Euphrates as much as two hundred miles to the north of Babylon. Here, at least, he had a home (8:1), and hear his wife died (24:18). He himself is supposed to have died in exile, never again seeing his native land; and in the Middle Ages what was called his tomb was not far from the present site of Bagdad. That he was a grown man, and not a child, when deported is indicated by his familiarity with the temple in which he possibly performed priestly functions. It was not until he arrived in Chaldea that he began his prophetic utterances, supposed by interpretation of his sayings to have been five years after his arrival in that land. The aged Jeremiah was not taken away from Palestine, and thus Ezekiel seems raised up to communicate the divine will to his fellow captives. The sad state of these people had not conquered their defiant and rebellious spirit (2:3, 4). His first prophecies related to the impending fall of Jerusalem, and after that event he was commissioned to comfort his brethren and inspire them with hope for the future. Thus there are two great divisions in his book; the first (chapters 1 to 32) relating to judgment upon sinful Israel and those relating to mercy (25-48); for there is a section that may be considered as either, a transition as it were from 25 to 32, still threatening but also encouraging. The close of his book is a grand



climax of the glory that was to be in the Messianic age. Here our study is found.  
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Lesson Text.11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of s'r-I by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of s'r-I shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of s'r-I.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.  
[[Divider made of dots and spaces]]

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant D'vd; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

24 And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant D'vd a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the civil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.  
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Explanatory Notes.

I even. Notable as showing infinite grace, taking the place and performing the duties that had been first entrusted to faithless servants

as described in the opening verses of the chapter; he will not permit his designs to fail, especially verses 6, 8. Search. The word "for" may be added to obtain the sense with seek them out; continued seeking until the object is attained. His flock. Idea of proprietorship; God had not entirely given over his people, though they were scattered over the entire East; Ezekiel was the principal prophet, but there were others, as Daniel, and possibly Habakkuk. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi belong to the period after the return from captivity. Cloudy and dark day. Of unbelief and rebellion (cp. Isa. 45: 9-11; Jer. 31: 10). The mountains

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of Israel. Specified as the place where they were to be brought, the veritable return is promised, and it was fulfilled to as many as would hear and obey with willingness. Inhabited places. Parts adapted for peaceable occupation and permanent dwelling (but see Special Topics). Fat pasture ... bind up ... strengthen. The contrast must be observed in verse 4f. The fat and the strong. A phrase susceptible of two interpretations, but the most reasonable is reference to the unfaithful shepherds who had prospered by their neglect, and had by oppression profited by the misfortunes of the flock; for these are said to be fed with judgment, called to give account and punished if guilty; the contrast is seen in the next words, "as for you" ... One shepherd, etc. Generally understood as a reference to our Lord, who was of the seed of David (cp. 2 Sam. 7:13; Psalm 132:11). Be their God (see 2 Cor. 6:16). A prince (Isa. 9:6; Acts 5:31). Covenant of peace (Heb. 8:6, 8, 10; 10:16; 12:24). Evil beasts. The symbol of devouring sins; the absence of these emphatically described by the terms dwell ... in the wilderness where wild animals abound and sleep in the woods, the forests where they make their lairs; security from evil. Make them ... a blessing. (cp. Psalm 72:6; Rom. 15:29; Eph. 1:3). Yield her fruit (John 15:2, 5); the symbol of which is the increased fertility of the promised land. Shall know, etc. (cp. John 14:7, 23; 17:3, 8, 20). Broken the bands ... delivered (cp. Heb. 2:15; 2 Cor. 1:10).  
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Special Topics.

How eloquently is impressed here the hope of a future! Many of us are quite content with our temporal present surroundings, but we know that life is uncertain, and that we are exposed to the possibilities of change. There were not a few Jews who were content to remain in the strange land whither they had been taken. Ezra (1:4) speaks of those who were thus willing to remain in the land of captivity. They might have been born in Chaldea, settled in some business calling, and were reasonably prosperous; for the latter years of the captivity were not marked with much hardship. Some may have been faint-hearted in view of the long desert journey filled with all manner of perils that lay between them and the home of their fathers. Such are they among us who think this present evil world is good enough for them, and so entertain no desire for a better country. To such this present study brings its own exhortation. There is sure to come a change of conditions amid which, if there be no hope in the Shepherd and bishop of our souls, and no appreciation of God's promise, there must come a dark despair.  
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But what a relief it is when dark says do come, and they surely will to the best of us, to know that we have a God who is anxiously concerned for us. Like silly sheep we go astray. Since we are reasonable beings it will not do to lay the blame upon unfaithful shepherds. These men who are styled sheep were indeed helpless when the forgetfulness of God in earlier days brought them into captivity. But we cannot claim immunity from the results of our own doings. Sinners we unquestionably are, and are willing to admit it, yet the love of God overshadows us (Rom. 5:8). If we did but know God and comprehend the beatings of his great heart for us, we would likely be far different people than we are. But if we do not know the love of God, it is certain that dark and cloudy days are before us. The greatest of sins, in view of the gospel of Christ, is to be willingly content not to know him (John 3:19).

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It is not wise to confine these utterances of God's prophets entirely to their spiritual signifi- cance. There are many clear and precise utterances in Holy Scripture that speak of the gathering together of the Jews in their own land that have not found fulfillment in the return of which we read in Ezra and Nehemiah. Those who did so returned were surrounded by enemies that were to them as wolves, hindering them by force and power in the work which God sent them to accomplish. With the coming of the Roman empire and its possession of the Holy Land the Jew has been a wanderer upon the face of the earth. There are too many prophecies that relate to a restored Israel that have never yet found anything like a fulfillment; and God's Word cannot be broken. It is not possible for us to imagine how this will be brought about, but it would not be strange if the distressing wars that have convulsed both Europe and Asia will prove a factor. The ways of God are mysterious, and there is no man who can claim to be in his counsels. The reason we comprehend Isaiah more than the other prophets is that the things he foretold have come to pass in this Gospel Age. Ezekiel was the prophet of a restoration that has not yet been fulfilled, and that is why so much of his language is enigmatical and difficult to construe. How the scattered chosen people shall be ultimately gathered is not revealed to us, but it is as certain as the declarations of the Most High.

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Nevertheless we ought to be impressed that God is a Seeker, and that we are the objects of his search. It is the world that he loves, and it is the world that he had that he has reconciled to himself. Jesus came into the entire world to seek and to save the lost. The representation we have here of God is precisely the same yearning that we behold in our Saviour. He seeks to bind up the afflicted, to strengthen the feebleness engendered by sin, and to bring back to his loving heart those who have strayed away from him. There is a gospel in Ezekiel, and a noted writer has composed a book with that as its title, basing it upon the thirty-sixth chapter. Observe the divine desire to bring us back where we belong (36: 24); the promise of a new heart (36: 26); the power of an endless life offered for simple acceptance (36: 27); the easy means by which all this may be secured (36: 37); and the security of the believer resting upon the spoken word (36: 36).

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The vision given Ezekiel was of Jesus Christ. He was to be the Prince who should deliver men from their bondage. He it was that brought to light the new and better covenant. He it is who

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