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## “I Was Blind, Now I See”

Lesson  
**16**  
Summary

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*John 9: Jesus, on the Sabbath, heals a man born blind—The Jews accuse Him of Sabbath violation—He lectures them on spiritual blindness.*

*John 10: Jesus is the good Shepherd—He gained power over death from His Father—He promises to visit his other sheep—He proclaims: ‘I am the Son of God.’*

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**Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:** **Living Water Sent From God:** The Hebrew word for “sent” is “shiloach.” Water emanating from the Gihon spring filled a pool of water was called the “Pool of Sent,” or “Pool of Shiloach.” The “living” (spring) water was sent through Hezekiah’s tunnel to be collected and stored for the people’s use. The name of the collection pool has been transliterated into the “Pool of Shiloam.”

**Poetic Imagery:** The Apostle John gives us beautiful poetry and insight as he relates the significant way Jesus healed the blind man. Jesus sent a blind man to the “Pool of Sent” to receive sight by washing his eyes in living water. The “Fountain of Living Waters,” giving sight to the blind man, was sent from God to give us all sight.

**Biblical Guidelines in Respecting the Blind:** “The Jewish attitude toward blindness is one of special concern, since blind people are naturally helpless in many ways, and therefore more likely to be exploited or hurt. The Torah commands: “Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind,” and this commandment is taken to include not only those who are actually blind, but also those who lack understanding of a particular matter. In other words, one must not trick a person who may be “blind” to what he is doing. The Bible also mentions blindness in reference to people who were blind, among them the patriarch Isaac, as well as Eli, the high priest, and Samson.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Bible to Be Read Rather than Recited from Memory:** “Judaism regards a blind person as perfectly normal, and the only restrictions placed upon him are due to the limitations of his physical disability. At one time it was believed that a blind person should not fulfil certain religious duties such as being called up to the Torah reading, conducting the service, acting as judge or reading the Shema. However, all these opinions were later refuted, and it is now accepted that a blind man may practice Judaism like any other Jew. He cannot, however, perform those acts which specifically involve reading a text such as the actual reading of the Torah or Megillah since these must be read from a kosher Hebrew text and not by heart or from braille.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Hebrew Braille:** “Because Israel is a country whose inhabitants have immigrated from all parts of the world, including many backward nations, there is a larger percentage of blind people in Israel than in other Western countries. Nevertheless, in Israel today, blind people can lead a normal life thanks to the fine educational institutions and numerous agencies and associations which aid in their job placement, training and rehabilitation . . . they can enjoy a vast amount of literature, biblical, secular, Hebrew and foreign . . . printed in Hebrew braille. (Strangely, Hebrew braille is written from left to right, like English writing.)” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) “Moreover, Israel has developed two machines to further aid blind people. The Transicon is a type of computer which electronically photographs printed material, and converts it into braille script. Thus, a blind man does not have to wait for a particular book to be printed in braille, but can read whatever he pleases. The second machine, the Philapbraille, is a typewriter which produces whatever is typed both in ordinary script and braille, so that the blind person typing may check his own work.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**The Eyes Have it!** In Israel, where the Orthodox Jews adamantly wish to impose their religious interpretation and standards, autopsies and dissection of bodies or body parts for study are openly disdained. Yet, corneal transplants are encouraged in order to save blindness. “Although the objections that apply to autopsies also apply to dissection for the purpose of anatomical study, enough people bequeath their bodies for this purpose so that religious opposition has been confined largely to autopsies, despite the fact that the *Halakhic* permission for such bequests is doubtful. Similarly most rabbinical authorities permit autopsies in the case of violent or accidental death or where crime is suspected. Most of those who oppose autopsies make an exception in the case of corneal transplants which restore sight to a blind person. In this specific instance one rabbi stated that the deceased would consider it an honor for his eye to be so used. The permissibility of organ banks is less likely in view of the rule in Jewish law that all mortal remains must ultimately be buried.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**The Shepherd’s Role:** In addition to the Lord’s names of sight, light and living waters, the imagery of the shepherd is a powerful lesson of the Savior’s role in our salvation. His prophets had one major role, to witness of Him, the Lamb of God. “Moses, fleeing from Egypt, came across Jethro’s daughters being ill-treated by local shepherds at a well in Midian. He saved them and watered their flocks for them. In gratitude Jethro gave Moses one of his daughters, Zipporah, as his wife and appointed him shepherd of his flocks (Exodus 2:16--21; 3:1). Thus Moses, like King David . . . spent his days

tending flocks of sheep.” “Elijah was not a professional prophet, but a simple shepherd . . . called upon by God to help the Jewish people turn from evil.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*) Amos, a shepherd, became a prophet and another shepherd, David, became a king. David’s reign provided the best kingdom Israel ever had. The great archaeological treasure, the Dead Sea Scrolls, was found by shepherds. Most important, are the images which connect with His title as the Lamb of God.

**The Lamb, the Garment, the Temple:** The modern Jewish Tallith (prayer shawl) is a garment like that used in the ancient temple. The one worn over the clothing is usually made from wool. It may have a significance in wrapping or covering ourselves in the Lamb of God. The word for lamb is Taleh and a female lamb is a Talitha, hence the name of the garment - Tallith. It has four markings that denote its religious meaning. The Tallith is a symbol of the Temple and is always used at a wedding. “. . . customary for the groom to cover the bride's head with his Tallith as a symbol of sheltering her; . . . a *huppah* constructed of a Tallith supported . . . by friends of the bride and groom . . . erected . . . outside, or at least in a spot open to the sky, underneath the stars” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

**Leading Sheep Today:** A farm house is on the Mount of Beatitudes with more than a hundred sheep near by. The boy shepherd leads them out every morning and returns in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year’s flock. The shepherd usually has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it’s time to move on, the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing noise alerts the other sheep, and then like a wave they begin to follow the others.

**Ancient Temple Practice:** The shepherd’s model is similar to an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple, the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then gather to follow the priests to participate in the ritual.

**Speaking to the Sheep:** Additionally, I have noticed how the shepherds in Israel develop a language for their sheep. The grunts, whistles, and sounds are recognized by the flock. I have also seen two shepherds meet on the hillsides as they lead their sheep. The shepherds stop, chat, and typically make a small fire and prepare a hot drink. In the mean time, their sheep begin to mingle. You could imagine the ownership confusion that might follow. Yet, when one shepherd departs, he simply begins talking and making his “sounds,” and his sheep follow him.

**Hear the Shepherd, Feel the Light:** “. . . we are . . . the sheep of his hand . . . if ye will hear his voice . . .” (*Psalms 95:7*) “. . . he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.” (*John 10:4*) How are we to know the voice of the Good Shepherd from the voice of a stranger? . . . when an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that, the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts . . . the Holy Ghost light springs up within them . . .” (*Discourses of Brigham Young, Pg.431*)

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