

[Lesson 43](#): The Shepherds of Israel (See L43 [Study Guide](#))

Purpose: To encourage us to fulfill our responsibilities as “shepherds of Israel.”

†1. Ezekiel’s Background †2. Pres. Ezra Taft Benson †3. Elder John R. Lasater †4. Intimate Knowledge of Us
How is a shepherd different from a shepherd?

1. The Shepherds of Israel

- [Ezekiel 34:1-8](#). The “word of the Lord of the Lord came unto me, saying, ... prophesy against the shepherds of Israel”.
- [Ezekiel 34:9-22](#). “Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand”.

Who were and who are the “shepherds of Israel”? †5. Elder Bruce R. McConkie
How might the Lord be displeased with some of us today?

What do true shepherds do for their sheep? (See verses 11-16 for insight.)

How can we *feed, heal, strengthen, gather, deliver, and bind up* our sheep? †6. Pres. Ezra Taft Benson

- [Ezekiel 34:23-31](#). “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, ... and ... be their shepherd.”
- How is the Savior like a shepherd to us? (See [Ezekiel 34:11-16](#); [Psalm 23](#); [Isaiah 40:11](#); and [John 10:11-15](#).)

2. Repentance and forgiveness

- [Ezekiel 18:21-32](#). “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? ... and not that he should return ... and live?”

What does it mean to “make ... a new heart and a new spirit”?

Why is this an important part of repentance?

How can we do this—i.e. “make ... a new heart and a new spirit?”

3. Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of bones

- [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#). The “Lord ... set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones”.

How is the resurrection symbolized in Ezekiel’s vision?

How is the restoration of the children to their promised land symbolized in his vision?

- Ezekiel 37:11. The “house of Israel ... say, **Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost...**”

“Although Israel’s hope may be as dead as the ‘great army’ of bones that Ezekiel saw, the Savior can bring it back to vitality and life.” (*Lesson Manual*)

What are some ways the Savior has renewed your hope? (See [Moroni 7:41](#).)

- Ezekiel 37:4. “Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, **hear the word of the Lord.**”

How does the word of the Lord give us life?

4. The stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph

- [Ezekiel 37:15-28](#).

“Ezekiel’s prophecy of the sticks of Judah and Joseph has a dual meaning. It refers to the latter-day combining of the scriptural records of Judah and Joseph (Israel). It also refers to the latter-day reunion of the kingdoms of Judah and Joseph (Israel).” (*Lesson Manual*)

- [1 Nephi 5:14](#); [2 Nephi 3:12](#); [D&C 27:5](#).

The “word *stick* in these verses refers to a type of wooden writing tablet commonly used in Ezekiel’s day. The stick of Judah symbolizes the Bible, and the stick of Joseph symbolizes the Book of Mormon.” (*Lesson Manual*)

- †7. Elder Boyd K. Packer

What blessings have come from having the Book of Mormon with the Bible?

How has the Book of Mormon reinforced for you the Bible’s witness of the Lord Jesus Christ?

- †8. Ezekiel’s Prophecy What will happen after the two sticks are put together?

- Ezekiel 37:26-28.

“Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them ... and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them”.

Next Week: L44 “Everything Shall Live Whither the River Cometh”; See L44: [Class Member Study Guide](#).
(You can download a free LDS Institute manual at: [Old Testament Student Manual: Religion 301 and 302](#).) † •

†1. Ezekiel's Background: “In 597 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon carried into captivity many people from the kingdom of Judah. Among these captives was Ezekiel, whom the Lord called as a prophet five years later. In 587 B.C. the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took many more captives. Ezekiel ministered to his exiled people until 570 B.C.

“Ezekiel’s writings include stern rebukes and glorious promises that apply not only to the ancient kingdom of Judah but to all Israel, including Church members today. Although Jerusalem had been destroyed, Ezekiel foresaw a day when Israel would be gathered and restored. This event is symbolized in his vision of the valley of dry bones and in his prophecy about the sticks of Judah and Joseph.” (*Lesson Manual*)

†2. President Ezra Taft Benson: “In Jesus’ time, the Palestinian shepherd was noted for his protection of his sheep. Unlike modern shepherders, the shepherd always walked ahead of his flock. He led them. The shepherd knew each of the sheep and usually had a name for each. The sheep knew his voice and trusted him and would not follow a stranger. Thus, when called, the sheep would come to him. (See John 10:14, 16.)

“At night shepherds would bring their sheep to a corral called a sheepfold. High walls surrounded the sheepfold, and thorns were placed on top of these walls to prevent wild animals and thieves from climbing over.

“Sometimes, however, a wild animal driven by hunger would leap over the walls into the midst of the sheep, frightening them. Such a situation separated the true shepherd—one who loved his sheep—from the hireling—one who worked only for pay and duty.

“The true shepherd was willing to give his life for the sheep. He would go in amongst the sheep and fight for their welfare. The hireling, on the other hand, valued his own personal safety above the sheep and would usually flee from the danger” (“[A Call to the Priesthood: ‘Feed My Sheep’](#),” *Ensign*, May 1983, 43).

†3. Elder John R. Lasater: “[Good Shepherd](#),” (3:04).

†4. Intimate Knowledge of the Sheep: “The shepherd is deeply interested in every single one of his flock. Some of them may be given pet names because of incidents connected with them. They are usually counted each evening as they enter the fold, but sometimes the shepherd dispenses with the counting, for he is able to *feel* the absence of any one of his sheep. With one sheep gone, something is felt to be missing from the appearance of the entire flock. One shepherd in the Lebanon district was asked if he always counted his sheep each evening. He replied in the negative, and then was asked how then he knew if all his sheep were

present. This was his reply: “Master, if you were to 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.” (In Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, 158-159.)

†5. Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Anyone serving in any capacity in the Church in which he is responsible for the spiritual or temporal well-being of any of the Lord’s children is a shepherd to those sheep. The Lord holds his shepherds accountable for the safety (salvation) of his sheep” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 710).

†6. President Ezra Taft Benson: “We call on you to extend yourselves with renewed dedication... We want you to watch, to feed, to tend, and to care for the flock and, in the event that some are temporarily lost, we challenge you to find them.” (“[A Call to the Priesthood: ‘Feed My Sheep’](#),” *Ensign*, May 1983, 43).

†7. Elder Boyd K. Packer: “The stick or record of Judah—the Old Testament and the New Testament—and the stick or record of Ephraim—the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ—are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other; as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands. Ezekiel’s prophecy now stands fulfilled” (“[Scriptures](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 53).

†8. Ezekiel's Prophecy:

- The children would be gathered into one kingdom with the Savior as King (Ezekiel. 37:21-22).
- The people would be cleansed and purified (Ezekiel 37:23).
- The people would observe the Lord’s statues (Ezekiel 37:24).
- The people would dwell in a promised land (Ezekiel 37:25). (*Lesson Manual*)

Recommended Reading:

- Elder John R. Lasater, “[Shepherds of Israel](#),” *Ensign*, May 1988.
- President Ezra Taft Benson, “[A Call to the Priesthood: ‘Feed My Sheep’](#),” *Ensign*, May 1983, 43.
- President James E. Faust, “[Responsibilities of Shepherds](#),” *Ensign*, May 1995, 46. President Faust tells a wonderful personal story.
- Elder Boyd K. Packer, “[Scriptures](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1982.

Recommended Videos:

- Elder John R. Lasater, “[Good Shepherd](#),” (3:04).

Visit stephenmbird.com