

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24ⁱⁱ

For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

ⁱⁱ About Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

In the ancient Near East, the king was often pictured as a shepherd. But the pre-exilic kings and leaders were often false shepherds, exploiting and neglecting their flocks. Now God will act as the good shepherd, searching out God's people scattered among the nations and

gathering them back to their own land. The reestablished monarchy will act only as God's faithful regent (vv. 22-24).

Ezekiel reveals God's nature as one of both compassion and judgment. God's mercy extends to the lost and injured—those who have suffered from the injustices of others as well as from their own wrong choices—and God's judgment reaches the sheep as well as the shepherds. As the shepherds have been judged, so also the sheep must be judged for their behavior to one another (vv. 17-22).