

# Bite Size Bible Study

## Sheep & Goats pt 1 #72

By Pastor Lee

These next four papers are a response to a question posed to me recently. "Why is the goat equated with evil and satan worship? Since I am a native born San Diego urbanite, I know almost nothing about sheep and goats. Hence, research was necessary. I found Sandra Richter's book about the Stewards of Eden most helpful among other miscellaneous other references.

In ancient Israel farm animals were maintained to provide for the family. The most common livestock were mixed flocks of Black Sinai goats and Awassi also known as Ausi, Baladi, Deiri, Ivesi, Gezirieh, Nuami and Syrian or fat-tailed sheep. They relied on these animals for milk, meat, cheese, goat hair (for tents, rugs, and bags), and Awassi wool (for fine textiles). Other products from these animals were fat (for candles and soap), skins (containers for wine, water, and churns), bones for tools, and parchment. The flocks were mixed partly because these two animals cohabit so well and partly to ensure the economic stability of the family.

Both animals are well adapted to the desert and desert step area. The sheep were by far more valuable, partly because their meat was preferred over goat, but primarily because of their renowned fleece. Awassi wool was used for garments of every sort. The Black Sinai goat was not as valuable. A reliable provider of milk and meat, but its coarse hair was utilized only for tent curtains, bags, and other "rough" textiles.

Sheep are more vulnerable than the goat. Sheep are picky eaters, more sensitive to drought and heat, and pretty much defenseless against predators. They have no biting teeth or claws, they get lost easily, and they are terribly nearsighted, and panic easily. So when one of these sheep gets lost, as they are prone to do, they typically hunker down and begin to bleat. This makes an effective homing signal for the nearest predator.

Goats are tough as nails. These Black Sinai goats have been indigenous to these regions for centuries. They are quite independent and are very capable of returning to an undomesticated state if need demands. This goat has an extremely high tolerance for heat and drought and will eat just about anything and can consume as much as 35 percent of their body weight in water in a matter of minutes. Even during the hottest part of the season, they only need to be watered once every four days or so.

Shepherds kept goats in mixed flocks because they are smart. A sheep, when confronted by a predator, will stand there and die a slow and horrible death, but a goat will fight back or run. A herd of sheep will follow wherever they are led even over a steep ravine; a goat will NOT.

### Interesting parallels of Jesus and the sheep

1. Jesus followed the Father without argument – Luke 22:42
2. Jesus did nothing but what the Father did – John 5:19
3. Jesus did not fight back when attacked – John 18:19-23
4. Jesus did not run from His violent death – Luke 24:7
5. Behold the Lamb of God – John 1:29

Is there any Biblical basis for goats being associated with evil? There are pagan religions that use the goat as a symbol for their worship. But that is not enough to say the goat is evil. Baal uses bovine as a symbol of their worship but we don't associate it with evil.

The negative significance of goats comes mostly from their being made into idols and worshiped as gods in pagan religions. This is reflected within the Bible itself in the prohibition against offering sacrifices to such idols. Probably the most visible association is the religion of Pan and the detestable things done in the worship of that goat god. I will leave the research of this Pan religion to you, as it is not only gross but highly abnormal.

However, there are three Bible stories that have been drawn on, rightly or wrongly, in the connection of goats with evil and the devil.

The Scapegoat – Leviticus 16

The Ram and the Goat – Daniel 8

And The Sheep and the Goats – Matthew 25: 31-46

We will look at each of these in the next three studies.