

## **The Shepherds in the Fields**

**by Francis Clark-Lowes**

And there were in Palestine shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And, lo, a Jewish settler came upon them and the swords of the Jewish soldiers shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the settler said unto them, Fear ye the wrath of my people: for unto us is born this day in the city of Tel Aviv a state which is called Israel.

And suddenly there came among the Jewish soldiers a multitude of the Arab host, praising the Lord and saying: Alahu Akbar.

But the seed of David slew the Arab host. And the settler now spake thus to the shepherds: 'This is our land, the land of our forefathers, Erez Israel. Make haste that ye depart in peace.'

Thus was it fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Ezra Danin: 'The Arabs of the Land of Israel, they have but one task left – to run away.' Seventy times ten thousand was the multitude who fled their land in those days.

And the Israelis destroyed their villages, yea the very land where they had stood was ploughed up and sowed with seed.

But the Palestinians were sore vexed in their hearts, and plotted how they should return to the land of their fathers.

But the leaders of the Israelis took counsel among themselves how they should overcome their enemies and conquer the remaining lands of the Palestinians.

And it came to pass even as it had been foretold in the scriptures, that the Israelis conquered the remainder of Palestine, even unto the Jordan River. And there was much rejoicing among the Israelis, and there was wailing and gnashing of teeth among the Palestinians.

And behold another Jewish settler came to those same shepherds, and to the seed of their loins, as they watched their flocks in the lands whither

they had fled. And he said even as it had been said of old: ‘This is our land, the land of our forefathers, Erez Israel. Make haste that ye depart in peace.’

But one of the shepherds, and his name was Eissa, which is called Jesus in the languages of the north, said to the settler: ‘How shall we that have been dispossessed live? Whither shall we go? We have already left our lands in Galilee, here we shall stand. We can no other. Have ye not read which was written by King Solomon?’

“So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.”

Verily what comfort shall ye gain from this injustice? What shall it profit a people if it gain the whole world, but lose its soul?

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies even as we could learn to love you.’

Now when the settler heard these words which were spoken by the shepherd Eissa he felt shame in his breast, but he hardened his heart. And he built him a wall to separate the Palestinians from the Israelis, and the shepherds from their fields.

And soldiers came forth with lanterns and torches and weapons, and laid hands upon Eissa and led him away.

But there were among the Israelis some who said: ‘Who is this man who is come amongst us? His words are words of wisdom. Therefore have our elders apprehended him.’

Thereupon did the elders’ anger wax greatly, and they bore witness against Eissa that he was a terrorist, and they scourged him and put him at last to the sword. And there was much rejoicing, yea even among the Palestinians.

For many said, among the Israelis and among the Palestinians: ‘Are we not two different peoples between whom peace is not possible, but if it be in different lands?’

Then came the wife of Pontius Pilate, the Washington legate, and spake: 'I have dreamed a dream, and in it I beheld a wall, and, lo, there was no way to pass from one side to the other, and the shepherds could not take their sheep to their fields.'

And Pilate was much troubled in his soul, for he knew of the wall which the Israelis had built, and he feared the strife this dream might foretell.

And so it was that Pilate commanded the Israelis to make a gate whereby the shepherds might pass with their flocks. But the Israelis in their cunning permitted the shepherds to pass, but their flocks they did not permit to go with them.

And presently it came to pass that the sheep perished from lack of nourishment. Then at last in the far north, in the land of England, they began to say: 'Is this not the sign of a foul oppression that the very sheep should die of starvation?'