

Acts 9: 36 - 43  
Psalm 23  
Revelation 7: 9 - 17  
John 10: 22 - 30

### **Notes on the Lesson from the Acts of the Apostles**

Joppa (verse 36) is the modern city of Jaffa, immediately north of modern Tel Aviv.

Lydda (verse 38) is the modern city of Lod, where Israel's main airport, Ben Gurion Airport, is located.

### **Notes on the Psalter Lesson**

The setting for this best-known and beloved Psalm is the Wilderness of Judea. This forbidding landscape (see upper photo right) has been used for the grazing of sheep for thousands of years and is still used for that purpose even today. The shepherds know where to find food, water, and shelter for their flocks and it is these images that make up the first four verses of the Psalm.



Particularly striking is the phrase “he leads me on the right paths”. The sides of the hills and mountains in the Wilderness are literally covered with millions of sheep paths that date back far into the mists of time (see lower photo right). Many of the paths, such as those in the photo are roughly parallel to each other. Others intersect at gentle angles, giving the appearance that a huge net covers the mountainside. These paths have been used by sheep for millennia but only the wise shepherd knows which path will lead to food, water, or shelter. Other paths may lead to wolves and other predators. The good shepherd leads the sheep on the right path.



### **Notes on the Gospel Lesson**

The “festival of the Dedication” (verse 22) is known today as Hanukkah or “the Festival of Lights”. This event celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple following the expulsion of the Seleucids from Jerusalem. The Seleucids had desecrated the Temple by sacrificing pigs on the altar and it was the miraculous burning of the Eternal Flame (which burned for eight days

although there was only enough oil for one day) that has been commemorated by the Jewish people since that day.

The portico of Solomon (verse 23) refers to the eastern wall of the Temple Mount. The platform upon which the Temple sat had been expanded twice since its original construction by Solomon but because the eastern side rested on the steep slopes of the Kidron Valley, all expansion had been to the north, south, and west. Since the eastern wall followed the same line as the original Temple Mount, it became known as the portico of Solomon. All four interior walls of the Mount were colonnades under which rabbis would teach and answer questions. In this account, we are informed under which covered portico Jesus was teaching.

Even modern shepherds in the Middle East know their sheep by name (verse 27) while the sheep know their master's voice and will respond to no other. However, the sheep do not respond to a proper name but to a particular sound that is all their own. One sheep might come to a clicking sound while another responds to the clucking of the tongue. Each sheep answers to a sound that is its own and only the master knows which sheep goes with which sound.