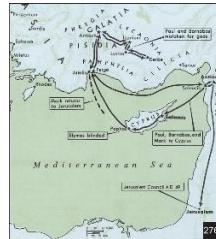


## Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 7

### Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba's First Missionary Journey ~ Part 2

We pick up the ongoing story of **Sha'ul** in Acts 13:13.



### Sha'ul's Sermon in Pisidian Antioch ~ Part 1

<sup>13</sup> Having set sail from Paphos, Sha'ul and his companions arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. There Yochanan (Mark) left them and returned to Yerushalayim, <sup>14</sup> but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat, they went into the synagogue and sat down. <sup>15</sup> After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message, "Brothers, if any of you has a word of exhortation for the people, speak!"

Without his name even being mentioned, this verse pays the greatest of all tributes to **Bar-Nabba**. So far, the order has always been **Bar-Nabba** and **Sha'ul** (Acts 13:2). It was **Bar-Nabba** who had set out as the leader of this expedition. But now it is **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba**. **Sha'ul** has assumed the expedition's leadership, and the lovely thing about **Bar-Nabba** is that there is no word of complaint from him. He was prepared to take second place so long as **God's** work was done.

One of the fantastic things about **Acts** is the heroism that is passed over in a sentence. **Pisidian Antioch** stood on a plateau 3,600 feet above sea level. To get to it, **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba** would have to cross the **Taurus** range of mountains by one of the most challenging roads in **Asia Minor**, a road which was also notorious for robbers and brigands.

The main interest of verse 13 is that it is an element in the biography of **Yochanan** (Mark), a deserter who redeemed himself. **Mark** was very young. His mother's house seems to have been the center of the **Messianic** community in **Yerushalayim** (Acts 12:12), and he must always have been close to the center of the faith. **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba** took him with them as their helper, for he was relative to **Bar-Nabba**, but he turned and went home. We will never know why. <sup>1</sup>

**After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets**, then as now, on **Shabbat**, there was added to the liturgy a reading from the **Torah** (the Pentateuch) and a **haftarah** ("conclusion"), which consisted of a reading from the **Nevi'im** (Prophets) or **Ketuvim** (Writings). Following this would be a **drashah** (literally, "investigation," i.e., teaching or sermon), depending on who was available to teach or preach. Hospitality often dictated offering this honor to a visitor if he was competent (see Luke 14:16-17 where **Yeshua** was given this honor).

**Sha'ul's** sermon in **Pisidian Antioch's** synagogue illustrates how he presented the **Gospel to Jews**. As with **Stephen's** speech in Acts 7:2-53, the appeal is through the history of **God's** dealings with the people of **Isra'el**. Eventually, **Yeshua** is presented as the "**Son of David**," a term everyone understood to mean the **Messiah**.

<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, The Acts of the Apostles.

***<sup>16</sup> So Sha'ul stood, motioned with his hand, and said: "Men of Isra'el and God-fearers, listen!***

***God-fearers.*** Besides **Sha'ul's** conviction that it was right to present the **Gospel** first to **Jews** (v. 5), he also knew that it was in the **synagogues** where he would find the **Gentiles** most likely to be responsive since "proselytes of the gate" were already interested in the one true **God**. One aspect of communicating the **Gospel** is determining which people will likely respond favorably. **Sha'ul** wasted little time trying to convince those who closed themselves off but invested much time in reaching people open to it. In this regard, the **Jewish** community is no different from **Gentile** communities. There is a full spectrum of receptiveness from persons relentlessly opposed to those whose hearts are waiting and aching for **God's Good News**.

***<sup>17</sup> The God of this people, Isra'el, chose our fathers. He made the people great during the time when they were living as aliens in Egypt, and with a stretched-out arm, He led them out of that land. <sup>18</sup> For some forty years, He took care of them in the desert, <sup>19</sup> and after He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Kena'an, He gave their land to His people as an inheritance. <sup>20</sup> All this took about 450 years.*** (400 years in Egypt, 40 in the Wilderness, and 10 until Joshua divided the Land.) ***After that, He gave them judges, down to the prophet Sh'mu'el. <sup>21</sup> Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Sha'ul Ben-Kish, a man from the tribe of Binyamin. After forty years, <sup>22</sup> God removed him and raised up David as king for them, making His approval known with these words, 'I found David Ben-Yishai to be a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want.'*** <sup>2</sup>

In our next post, **Sha'ul** and **Bar-Nabba** continue their **First Missionary Journey**.

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:13–22.