

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 169

Sha'ul's Voyage to Rome ~ Part 1

We continue in the **Book of Acts**. **Sha'ul's Voyage to Rome** begins in Acts 27:1.

Imagine a courtroom scene where **Sha'ul** is defending himself, and everyone is captivated by his story. This isn't just any trial—it's like a drama unfolding. **Festus**, the **Roman** governor, interrupts with disbelief, declaring **Sha'ul** is out of his mind due to his vast knowledge! Meanwhile, **King Agrippa**, intrigued, is on the verge of believing. It's almost comedic how **Sha'ul's** sincere yet complex testimony leaves them questioning whether he's a madman or a prophet. Just like that, truth can divert us in unexpected ways, leaving us pondering our own beliefs.

The time has now come for **Sha'ul** to be sent to **Rome** to make his appeal to **Caesar**. He is in the custody of **Julius**, a **Roman** officer, and accompanied by **Luke** and **Aristarchus**, a brother in the **Lord** from **Thessalonica**. Despite a warning from **Sha'ul** that trouble awaits them, they are blown off course and land in **Malta**. During the next three months, **Sha'ul** works with the people of **Malta** and heals many of their diseases.

David Stern's and others opine that *This account of Sha'ul's trip to Rome is considered one of the finest ancient descriptions of a sea voyage.*

From Caesarea to Crete

27¹ *Once it had been decided that we should set sail for Italy, they handed Sha'ul and some other prisoners over to an officer of the Emperor's Regiment named Julius.*

The “we” narrative is now resumed after being broken off at 21:18. We have no information about **Luke's** movements during the two intervening years. Still, it would be safe to think of him as spending much of his time in or around Caesarea (where Sha'ul was kept in custody) and making good use of his opportunities to gather information about the early days of the Christian movement.

2 *We embarked in a ship from Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and put out to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.*

Aristarchus from **Thessalonica** was with **Sha'ul** in **Ephesus** (19:29) and accompanied him with the collection from the **Gentile** congregations to **Yerushalayim** (20:4). He went with **Sha'ul** to **Rome** (Co 4:10, Pm 24).

3 *The next day, we landed at Tzidon, and Julius considerably allowed Sha'ul to go visit his friends and receive what he needed.*

Tzidon is about 70 miles north of **Caesarea**. **Yeshua** had visited this area during His ministry (Mattityahu 15:21–28).

4 *Putting to sea from there, we sailed close to the sheltered side of Cyprus because the winds were against us,*

The route of travel reflects the need to sail close to land and to tack against the **winds**.

5 then across the open sea along the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and so we reached Myra in Lycia. 6 There, the Roman officer found an Alexandrian vessel sailing to Italy and put us aboard.

The ship from **Adramyttium** would have taken them out of their way since it was going to follow the coast of the province of **Asia**. As a result, at **Myra**, on the southern coast of **Asia Minor**, the centurion found a ship from **Alexandria** that was going to **Rome**. The **Alexandrian** ship would have been part of the grain supply trade from **Egypt** to **Rome**.

7 For a number of days, we made little headway, and we arrived off Cnidus only with difficulty. The wind would not let us continue any farther along the direct route, so we ran down along the sheltered side of Crete from Cape Salmone; 8 and, continuing to struggle on, hugging the coast, we reached a place called Pleasant Harbor, near the town of Lasea.

The journey was being undertaken at the end of the sailing season, so the ship ran into difficulty. Sailing was dangerous from mid-September to mid-November, and the waterways closed for travel from then until February (see note at 28:11). It appears that **Sha'ul's** journey occurred in roughly mid-October. **Pleasant Harbor** was not a suitable place to spend the winter because the harbor was exposed to the open sea.

Warning Against the Voyage

9 Since much time had been lost, and continuing the voyage was risky because it was already past Yom-Kippur, Sha'ul advised them, 10 "Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be a catastrophe, not only with huge losses to the cargo and the ship but with loss of our lives as well."

Sha'ul offered a prophetic-like statement about the dangers of the voyage ahead. He had divinely given insight into the situation, and as an experienced traveler, he was well acquainted with the dangers of seafaring.

11 However, the officer paid more attention to the pilot and the ship's owner than to what Sha'ul said. 12 Moreover, since the harbor was not well suited to sitting out the winter, the majority reached the decision to sail on from there in the hope of reaching Phoenix, another harbor in Crete, and wintering there, where it is protected from the southwest and northwest winds.¹

The topography of **Phoenix**, on the island of **Crete**, was radically changed in the sixth century by an earthquake.

In our next post, we will continue to learn about **Sha'ul's Voyage to Rome**, beginning in Acts 27:13.

¹ Acts 27:1–12.