

Notes: February 20 2016

Start: 10 AM

Order of service:

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Praise and Worship Songs
8. Message
9. Aaronic Blessing
10. Kiddush
11. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: Identity Challenge

Moshe struggled with it, Isaiah struggled it. Even Sha'ul struggled it.

Who was Sha'ul?

According to his own testimony...

Act 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city and trained at the feet of Gamli'el in every detail of the Torah of our forefathers. I was a zealot for God, as all of you are today.

Act 22:4 I persecuted to death the followers of this Way, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison.

Act 22:5 The cohen hagadol and the whole Sanhedrin can also testify to this. Indeed, after receiving letters from them to their colleagues in Dammesek, I was on my way there in order to arrest the ones in that city too and bring them back to Yerushalayim for punishment.

In Acts 23:6 when addressing the Sanhedrin and the Cohen Ha Gadol during one of his trials before Israel's leaders...

Act 23:6 But knowing that one part of the Sanhedrin consisted of Tz'dukim and the other of P'rushim, Sha'ul shouted, "Brothers, I myself am a Parush and the son of P'rushim; and it is concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I am being tried!"

Act 26:4 "So then! All Jews know how I lived my life from my youth on, both in my own country and in Yerushalayim.

Act 26:5 They have known me for a long time; and if they are willing, they can testify that I have followed the strictest party in our religion — that is, I have lived as a Parush.

Act 26:9 "I used to think it was my duty to do all I could to combat the name of Yeshua from Natzeret;

Act 26:10 and in Yerushalayim I did so. After receiving authority from the head cohanim, I myself threw many of God's people in prison; when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

Act 26:11 Often I went from one synagogue to another, punishing them and trying to make them blaspheme; and in my wild fury against them, I even went so far as to persecute them in cities outside the country.

Sha'ul thought he was doing the will of God, giving Him his best and eradicating those who were maligning.

As Jeri was talking about earlier today in not giving God leftovers, Sha'ul was not halfheartedly doing this but was full of conviction in doing what he was doing. And what he was doing he thought was right and therefore justified.

By today's standards Sha'ul would have been recognized as a “rising star”, an “up and comer” in the Pharasaich community.

He had the drive, ambition and motivation that people look for in future leaders.

Yet a strange thing happened on the way to Damascus...

Act 26:12 "On one such occasion, I was traveling to Dammesek with the full authority and power of the head cohanim.

Act 26:13 I was on the road, and it was noon, your Majesty, when I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my traveling companions.

Act 26:14 We all fell to the ground; and then I heard a voice saying to me, in Hebrew, 'Sha'ul! Sha'ul! Why do you keep persecuting me? It's hard on you to be kicking against the ox-goats!'

Act 26:15 I said, 'Who are you, sir?' and the Lord answered, 'I am Yeshua, and you are persecuting me!

Act 26:16 But get up, and stand on your feet! I have appeared to you to appoint you to serve and bear witness to what you have already seen of me, and to what you will see when I appear to you in the future.

Act 26:17 I will deliver you from the People and from the Goyim. I am sending you

Act 26:18 to open their eyes; so that they will turn from darkness to light, from the power of the Adversary to God, and thus receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who have been separated for holiness by putting their trust in me.'

What people identify in others regarding their “leadership qualities”, Adonai already knew what he had planned for Sha'ul and was conveyed to Sha'ul by Yeshua.

His previous identity would follow Sha'ul and would impact his relationship with other followers of Yeshua...

Act 9:21 All who heard him were amazed. They asked, "Isn't he the man who in Yerushalayim was trying to destroy the people who call on this name? In fact, isn't that why he came here, to arrest them and bring them back to the head cohanim?"

Act 9:26 On reaching Yerushalayim, he tried to join the talmidim; but they were all afraid of him — they didn't believe he was a talmid.

Act 9:22 But Sha'ul was being filled with more and more power and was creating an uproar among the Jews living in Dammesek with his proofs that Yeshua is the Messiah.

Some may not understand or even like what you have come to accept...

Act 9:23 Quite some time later, the non-believing Jews gathered together and made plans to kill him;

Act 9:24 but their plot became known to Sha'ul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to do away with him;

Many of you have been challenged by your family and friends regarding what you have come to accept and believe.

Although not to the extreme that Sha'ul was facing, but still being challenged none the less.

Many of them like yourselves believe in the same God and the same Messiah, yet don't see what you see.

Sha'ul followed the same God and was anticipating Messiah, but it took Messiah to open His eyes in order for him to see Yeshua.

Yeshua told Sha'ul that he would...

Act 26:18 to open their eyes; so that they will turn from darkness to light, from the power of the Adversary to God, and thus receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who have been separated for holiness by putting their trust in me.'

Those who have come to believe in Yeshua have had their eyes open and received forgiveness of their sins, but have they received fully what Yeshua told Sha'ul he would do...

I am in the process of writing an article for LinkedIn for several Christian forums I have joined.

The article is regarding Passover and the Christian's place at the Seder table.

This is an audience similar to those that you face in your families who are believers...they have accepted Yeshua and follow Him, but are in essence like Sha'ul before his Damascus road experience, where he thought he was doing the will of God but in reality wasn't. Likewise many believers are walking this similar path.

They are missing the fullness of what God has for them.

Sha'ul was a good Parush, by the standards of other Parush, yet was doing what was contrary to the true will of God.

By persecuting the people who came to accept Yeshua, Sha'ul was in essence persecuting Yeshua.

Sometimes it takes someone not as close to your situation to speak...

Act 9:26 On reaching Yerushalayim, he tried to join the talmidim; but they were all afraid of him — they didn't believe he was a talmid.

Act 9:27 However, Bar-Nabba got hold of him and took him to the emissaries. He told them how Sha'ul had seen the Lord while traveling, that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Dammesek Sha'ul had spoken out boldly in the name of Yeshua.

Sha'ul's transformation was one of miraculous proportions. Epic in such a way that people still saw and identified him by what he had done in the past.

Yet even though people may keep us in the past, we are not bound by the past...

I will be talking more next week about this passage in Sha'ul's second letter to the Corinthian community...but for now this is what I want you to take from what I am talking about today.

2Co 3:12 Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open —

2Co 3:13 unlike Moshe, who put a veil over his face, so that the people of Isra'el would not see the fading brightness come to an end.

2Co 3:14 What is more, their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away.

I believe Sha'ul is applying his own experience when writing.

2Co 3:15 Yes, till today, whenever Moshe is read, a veil lies over their heart.

2Co 3:16 "But," says the Torah, "whenever someone turns to Adonai, the veil is taken away."

2Co 3:17 Now, "Adonai" in this text means the Spirit. And where the Spirit of Adonai is, there is freedom.

2Co 3:18 So all of us, with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are being changed into his very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by Adonai the Spirit.

The light that shines from us as believers is that same brilliant light that blinded Sha'ul, yet is a beacon that directs the paths of many.

If we shade that light or conceal it,

2Co 4:5 For what we are proclaiming is not ourselves, but the Messiah Yeshua as Lord, with ourselves as slaves for you because of Yeshua.

2Co 4:6 For it is the God who once said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has made his light shine in our hearts, the light of the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of the Messiah Yeshua.

2Co 4:13 The Tanakh says, "I trusted, therefore I spoke." (Psalm 116:10) Since we have that same Spirit who enables us to trust, we also trust and therefore speak;

2Co 4:14 because we know that he who raised the Lord Yeshua will also raise us with Yeshua and bring us along with you into his presence.

Sha'ul offered a very consistent message to whomever he spoke...

Act 26:18 to open their eyes; so that they will turn from darkness to light, from the power of the Adversary to God,

and thus receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who have been separated for holiness by putting their trust in me.'

2Co 4:3 So if indeed our Good News is veiled, it is veiled only to those in the process of being lost.

2Co 4:4 They do not come to trust because the god of the `olam hazeh (this world) has blinded their minds, in order to prevent them from seeing the light shining from the Good News about the glory of the Messiah, who is the image of God.

2Co 4:5 For what we are proclaiming is not ourselves, but the Messiah Yeshua as Lord, with ourselves as slaves for you because of Yeshua.

2Co 4:6 For it is the God who once said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has made his light shine in our hearts, the light of the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of the Messiah Yeshua.