

Sha'ul's Ecclesia

The Doctrine of One Bread

When Yeshua began His ministry on earth, He chose an unusual group of people to be His Talmidim (Disciples). Each one obeying the Torah, but from his own agenda. Yeshua gave them a sense of purpose, as He began to put meat on the bones of the Law; they became His family or brethren (Matthew 23:8). They welded together as a family, beginning at first with the twelve which were surrounded by His overwhelming love and deep compassion. As they walked the highways and by-ways, He revealed to them His kingdom. After His death, in the upper room, the family had increased considerably to one hundred and twenty.

After they had received the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit), the promise of the Father the Lord raised up another man who was to figure prominently in their teaching, whose name was Rabbi Sha'ul of Tarsus, later to be known as Paul (Acts 9:4-16.).

Following his conversion Sha'ul, who we know as Paul, began to teach a deeper sense of community than that of family. Where once they were brethren now in Ruach Hakodesh, they were 'members' one of another (1.Cor.12:12-13.), a living breathing organism, all of which were learning to surrender one to another and take on the office of a servant (Matthew 20:26-28.)

But the question begs an answer, 'Why must the relationship deepen?' Is it because it looks better to those who are outside the group? No! Because in their midst was the presence of the Holy God, the Sh'khinah. The same Holy One who had visited Abraham in Genesis 15:8, the one the Hebrews called 'Lapied' (The Flame of Yahweh), the one described in the New Testament by the writer to the Hebrews as 'A Consuming Fire' (Hebrews 12:28-29.).

Paul knew of the danger of trifling with a three times Holy God. As Pharisee of the Pharisees, he had in depth knowledge of how God had dealt in ages past with his people (Ex.13:21, 3:2, 19:17-19, 2.Chron.7:1 and Matthew 3:11.), and time and again he reminded them of the danger of letting familiarity breed contempt (Romans 6, Hebrews 12:13, Gal 4:30, 5.4) The Jewish people had paid heavily for allowing sin in the camp at Ai (Joshua 7:4-26.) and the principle is still the same. We are members one of another as Paul has said and we are rendered less than useless if we allow sin in the camp. We must no longer think of ourselves, but think of the body with Yeshua in the midst.

The Pauline community had a deep sense of the presence of God, a holy reference that brought them into obedience, something the church by and large, has lost. While the church plays with the gifts but forgets the giver, (Matthew 7:22-23), so his Holy Spirit has been grieved and has pulled away from many of our congregations. So as the church desperately seeks its way, so it must learn again about the mystery of 'The Body' or the doctrine of 'One Bread'.

In the partaking of Communion, there is a warning for he who eats and drinks unworthily (1.Cor.11:27-33.) brings judgement on the rest of the Body. Paul continues to say that this is why some are sick and some are even dying, for we do not live to ourselves alone.

In Matthew 18:15-19, there is the clear procedure for church discipline, and in v.20 of this same chapter the church is reminded that the Lord is in the midst. In Luke 17:3-4 he reveals to the congregation how to deal with personal disputes. Personal relationships within the Body are precious, many fellowships do not really know their own individual members, or if they can rely on them. In Gal.2:9 Paul gives an insight into the way in which early church relationships were conducted. When they received a brother into a fellowship, he was offered the right hand of fellowship as one who is beloved.

The right hand of fellowship goes back to the Old Testament, to the days of Abraham when at that time it was placing the hand under the thigh (Gen 24:2) It evolved unto striking the thigh (Jeremiah 31:19) and then later the handshake (Ezekiel 17:18). All these were ways that a man gave his word or made a covenant with his fellow men. When a man shakes the hand of his brother to welcome him into the fellowship, he's making a covenant between him and his brother with God as the witness. If either one was to break the covenant, chastisement from the Lord was to be expected, however in the Old Testament times this would mean death, for you are submitting your life for his life.

The administration of the church is dealt with in Ephesians 4:11, for it is clear that someone must take responsibility for the congregation. This must only be those who are firstly, mature in the faith, and secondly, equipped with spiritual gifts, as no-one would dare to assume leadership without the directive of the Ruach Hakodesh.

The teaching Yeshua gave on this subject (Matthew 20:25-28) in this scripture is clear, as it is in James 3:1. Furthermore, in the Old Testament, in Psalm 75 the same teaching looms large, in verses 5-7. How different this teaching is from what is practised in fellowships today! Paul deals with this subject firmly in 1 Cor.1:12 as it causes schism in the Body. It is important that we always take our guidance from scripture and the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament, David reveals some truths about leadership over God's flock:-

"He who rules over men must be just,
ruling in the fear of God, and he shall
be like the light of the morning when the
sun rises, a morning without clouds, like
the tender grass springing out of the
earth by clear shining after-rain."

2. Samuel 23:4.

Finally in 1 Kefa (Peter) chapter 5, Peter illuminates the fact to those who are leaders, to lead from the front but however, by example.

The Pauline community were a group of people whose first priority was to obey the Holy Spirit and in doing so discover the truths of the kingdom, which is the only way up in God's economy, is down. Perhaps at this stage we are beginning to glean something of the reason why the Early Church was so productive in the gospel.

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully
come, they were all with one accord in one
place, and suddenly there came a sound
from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,
and it filled all the house where they were
sitting. And there appeared unto them
cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat
upon each of them, and they were all filled
with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak
with other tongues as the Spirit gave them
utterance.

Acts 2:1-4.