

The WildBranch Ministry

...*thou bearest not the root, but the root
thee. Romans 11:18*

Adoption of Sons

One of the most provocative teachings of Sha'ul (Paul) is found in the first part of chapter 4 of the book of Galatians. Galatians - you know, that book that everybody quotes to support their premise that Paul's words have trumped our Savior's word. Sha'ul's comments concerning the adoption of sons have their context back in the last part of chapter 3. The teaching of the schoolmaster is directly connected to the heirs according to the promise and to the adoption of sons.

According to the Scriptures, the parents are designed to teach the children. In the hoity-toity, high-browed Greek culture, a *paidagogos*, or schoolmaster, was hired to teach and transport the young boys (*pais*) and girls to public teaching arenas, from where we get our modern day public school system. Once the young boy or girl reached a certain age, they were able to transport themselves to and fro. Sha'ul uses these customs to teach the background of what it means to be a Son of God. Once a young boy was shown the whats and hows by the schoolmaster, he reaches a point where he is able to do things on his own. He is no longer under the schoolmaster. This human example is also taught by Sha'ul, using the agricultural principles of how seed works. According to B^ere'shiyt (Genesis) 1:11 the seed (faith, Messiah) is in the fruit (Torah, schoolmaster). When the fruit is produced, the seed is contained in the fruit. The purpose of the fruit is to propagate the seed. Once the seed is received, it can now produce its own fruit, which will in turn contain the same seed, and the process goes on and on. This is one reason why Sha'ul talked about the seed more than any one single individual.

In the Hebrew culture of Scripture, the parents were responsible for the children and their education. The instructions (*Torah*) of our Master were taught to the children by the parents. Before a boy was called a son, he was a *na'ar*, a *yeled*, or even an '*oleyl*' in Hebrew. This is comparable to our words child, infant, lad or even babe. In the Hebrew and Greek culture, a boy, until he reaches a certain age, listens to and learns from his tutor/parent like any other child. In Hebrew they are called '*oleyl*' or *na'ar*, and in Greek they are called *nepios* or *pais*. When a *nepios/pais* reaches a certain age, they sometimes go through a ceremonial process of becoming a "son." Some cultures call this the age of accountability; in Israel it is called a *bar mitzvah*. Son is *ben* in Hebrew and *huios* in Greek. Hosea expresses this difference very clearly.

Hoshea (Hosea) 11:1

"When Israel was a child [na'ar], then I loved him, and called my son [ben] out of Egypt."

In Sh^emot (Exodus) 4:22, YHVH calls Israel His firstborn. He treats the whole nation as one man. I believe this same concept was spoken of Yeshua' as well.

Y^esha'yahu (Isaiah) 9:6

"For unto us a child [yeled] is born, unto us a son [ben] is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

I submit that two different prophecies are revealed here: That He would be born (*yuled*) a child (*yeled*) unto us, but a son (*ben*) would be given unto us. I see a very clear reference to a crucifixion here that only a son (*ben*) could fulfill.

Yochanan (John) 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

I also believe that Yeshua' was not considered a "son," per se, until Luke 2:41-50. There are some very provocative words used here that are designed to point us right to what today is called a *bar mitzvah*.

Luke 2:41-50

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child [pais] Yeshua' tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them."

As far as we can verify historically, the liturgy and customs of today's modern *bar mitzvah* are hard to trace to the first century, but anthropologists have found that most cultures have a so-called rite of passage or something similar, with a ceremony attached to it. It is understood that some of the customs and liturgy of today can indeed be traced back long

before the first century. Some of these customs are revealed in this narrative. First of all, most cultures deemed a boy to have become a man at or around twelve to fourteen years of age. Modern Judaism uses the completion of the thirteenth year plus one day. Not all *bar mitzvahs* are the same. There is much difference in style, but all contain some of the same customs, especially in closer knit Orthodox communities. The boy will be the right age. His parents are to be present. He will be called up (*'aliyah*) to read the Torah portion for that time. When he is finished, he will be called a "son of the commandments," and the father will bring forth or present his son to the congregation. The son will now be responsible for himself, and is expected to follow in his father's trade.

The text in Luke bothers to tell us what time of the year this took place, and how old Yeshua' was. This is not the time nor place to do the detailed study of when Yeshua' was conceived and born, but suffice it to say that the same writer, Luke, gives us the answer by giving the details of Yeshua's relationship with Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist). Yeshua' was conceived during the Feast of Dedication (*Chanukah*), and born during the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). This puts Yeshua's age around 12½ years old in this narrative. Why tell us how old He was? We know that Yoseph (Joseph) and Miriam (Mary) are with Him. When they leave, Yeshua' stays behind, and they assume that He is with everyone else. When they return, they find Him sitting among the elder teachers, and were astonished at His wisdom and understanding. They asked Him what he was doing, as they were in sorrow at not being able to find Him. And Yeshua' stated almost verbatim the conclusion of a *bar mitzvah*. "*Did you not know that I would be about my Father's business?*" They did not understand, because Yoseph's business was a carpenter. Yeshua' however was saying that He was about The Father's business. He has become, if you will, a Son of the Father. Later on, the true Father will present His Son publically by introducing Him as His beloved Son. Yeshua' will continue to say that He is following in His Father's business.

Yochanan 3:35

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

Yochanan 5:20

"For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel."

Yochanan 15:16

"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Luke 10:22

"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Let's address the context now of Sha'ul's teaching in Galatians 3:26-4:7. Sha'ul ends chapter 3 by stating that we are all sons of God by faith in Messiah Yeshua', and that if we are Messiah's, then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Now remember that the last words of Yeshua' to His disciples, in Mattityahu (Matthew) 28:19-20, were to go unto all nations teaching them to observe *"whatsoever I have commanded you."* The heirs are likened unto children growing up.

Galatians 4:1-3

"Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child [nepios], differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage [doulos, servants] under the elements of the world:"

When we are children, we obey because we are told to. We are no different than a servant. But there will come a time when the child (*nepios*) will become a son (*huios*). Sha'ul uses the example of God's own Son, if you will, to illustrate the process we go through.

Galatians 4:4

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

In the life of a child, which is the context of these passages, there comes a time when the child is brought forth as a son. The Son, Yeshua', was brought into existence through a woman, just like we are; He was brought up under a schoolmaster, just like we are.

Luke 2:49-52

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Yeshua' increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

When Yeshua' grew up, He was no longer under his parents tutelage, but He kept all the commandments because that is what He was taught. So He is found teaching among the teachers. The proverbist refers to this same idea when he says to train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. This is the purpose of the schoolmaster. When we are a child, we obey our parents because we have to. Even though their rules are to train us when we are older, as a child we do not understand this.

When the fullness of time has come and we are no longer under our parents' rule, and yet we continue to imitate our parents, we are truly sons and daughters, and are no longer children. Because Yeshua' is our walking example, when we follow in His footsteps, we too are now "sons of the commandments," no longer under the tutelage of our schoolmaster, and we can now produce our own fruit. You and I are now able to cry out, Abba, Father!

Galatians 4:5-6

*"To redeem them that were **under the law**, that we might receive the **adoption of sons**. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."*

Once again, the context here is the comparison of a child (*nepios*) with a son (*huios*). A child is under the responsibility of a parent (Hebrew) or schoolmaster (Greek) until the time has come for them to fly out of the nest, so to speak. Now they are placed as a son, and have all the responsibility and inheritance of a son. Remember, Abraham is our model. The English word adoption is the Greek word *huiothesia*, or literally to place as a son. In context here, it is the culminating process of a child becoming a son. In verse 1, the heir is a *nepios*, but when the fullness of time was come he becomes a *huios*. Because we follow the Messiah, because we are placed in Messiah, now we, too, are sons of God. Since Yeshua' is the only begotten Son of God, then we must be in Him in order to be sons of God.

It might be added that the custom of inheritance is that my father passes on his inheritance to me. If I am a child still at home, still under the schoolmaster, I am an heir, but through my youth and lack of maturity, I cannot receive my inheritance. In other words, I am no different than a servant. But when I continue in my father's instructions and then I am placed as a son (*bar mitzvah*), I am now not only an heir, but can potentially receive my inheritance. This is the subject of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:11-12

"And he said, A certain man had two sons [huios]: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living."

The younger son was of age to go out on his own, and was able to request his inheritance first. Of course, he did not follow the instructions of his parents (schoolmaster), and soon found that his way was not producing much fruit. As a matter of fact, he found himself more of a servant now than he did when he was just a child. He went back to where he came from, and the father treated him once again like a son. In short, a son is one who reflects the image of his father. A son is one who takes the trade of his father and passes it down to his son. Now I can be about my Father's business.

. Shalom Alechem!

©1993–2020 The WildBranch Ministry. | P.O. Box 97, Vernal, UT, 84078 | 1-435-789-3713 |
WildBranch.org