Paul’s Vision of the Man of Macedonia
16: 6-10

50 AD

DIG: Who spread the gospel to the province of Bithynia? Why was Macedonia so important? Note the change from “they” to us in verse 10. How does this relate to Luke 1:3-4? How and why is this closed door pivotal?

REFLECT: How sensitive are you to the direction of the Ruach ha-Kodesh? When was the last time He told you “no!” How did you respond? Did you plow ahead anyway? How did that work out for you? Or did you obey? In hindsight, what did you avoid? With so many possible reasons for feeling led a certain way, how do you sort out the voice of the Holy Spirit from all others? How would you advise someone to navigate this? God still calls people to the mission field. Perhaps many today will encounter a “Macedonian man” who will call them out to the mission field. Might you be one of those people?

These verses provide a brief summary of Paul’s travel’s that eventually lead him to Troas, an important part on the coast of Asia. What this passage suggests is that while Paul seems to have planned to head directly across Galatia and into the province of Asia, and perhaps on to Ephesus, not once but twice ADONAI had to correct his course.\(^{366}\)

Having passed through the Phrygian region of the province of Galatia, Paul decided to move further west to the Roman province of Asia, in the western part of Asia Minor (now part of Turkey), but he was forbidden by the Ruach ha-Kodesh to speak the word there. This explains why they had to go to Phrygia and Galatia . . . because they had been forbidden to speak the gospel in Asia Minor. But that area was an important one, and in the future there would be churches in such cities as Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (see the commentary on Revelation Ay - Write, Therefore, What Is Now). We don’t’ know how they were forbidden, but Paul was eventually allowed to go there on his Third Missionary Journey (16:6). Paul was being guided by hindrance. The Ruach ha-Kodesh often guides as much by the closing of doors as He does by the opening of doors. God knows what He is doing when He says, “No.”

When they came to Mysia (northwest of Phrygia), they were trying to proceed into the province of Bithynia on the coast of the Black Sea (north of Galatia). First and Second
Peter were written from this area (First Peter 1:1) so it seems that Peter was the one chosen by ADONAI to evangelize this region. But the Ruach of Yeshua (this is the only reference to the Spirit of Jesus in the New Covenant) would not allow them. This was the only time that the Ruach is referred to by that title. He is referred to as the Ruach of Messiah in Romans 8:9, and the Ruach of Messiah Yeshua in Philippians 1:19. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas (or to give it its full name, Alexandria Troas), on the coast of the Aegean Sea. It was the seaport of Mysia and a free Greek city in Paul’s day (16:7-8). More importantly, however, it was the main port-of-call between Asia Minor and Macedonia. From Troas, Paul might have traveled in several different directions, but the matter was settled by God Himself.

That night, God made Paul’s direction clear. Now a vision appeared to Paul in a dream. Luke implies that, having arrived in Troas during the day, Paul received a vision at night. A man from Macedonia was standing and pleading with him, saying: Come over to Macedonia and help us (16:9). A call to help is often a cry to save in the Bible (Genesis 49:25; Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:26; Psalm 10:14; Isaiah 41:10). The greatest help we can bring to anyone is the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. This would be the first entry of the gospel into the continent of Europe, completely uncharted territory. Strategically, Macedonia also served as the link between Rome and the whole eastern part of the Roman Empire. Having received the divine vision, however, Paul did not hesitate.

As soon as he had seen the vision (see Bf – Peter’s Vision: A closer look at visions or dreams), immediately we tried to go to Macedonia (across the Aegean Sea to the mainland of Greece), concluding together that God had called us to proclaim the Good News to them (16:10). At this point – in mid-sentence - Luke slips into the first of the we passage in Acts. The shift from they in verse 8 to we here probably means that Luke joined the other missionaries in Troas. The Gentile author Luke traveled with Paul, and reports his own experiences. Like Timothy, Luke was to be Paul’s faithful friend and loyal companion for the rest of his life. Verse 10 is the first of the us passages in Acts. They will continue until 16:17 and resume at 20:5. The question is often asked, “Who is included in this we passage?” So, let’s take a more detailed look at them.

A closer look at the “us” or “we” passages and sea passages: We must first admit that the author seldom intrudes himself directly into the text. There are only a few parenthetical remarks (17:18 and 21). So we must ask why here? Why now? Why this? Well, Luke was present for a very limited amount of time with Paul during the Second Missionary Journey and more extensively during the Third Missionary Journey. The author does not wish to make a great deal of his own personal participation in these events,
especially since he seems only to have been an observer and recorder of the actions and words of others, and so he quietly and subtly includes the us or we passages, without fanfare, and thus without introduction.

Luke’s played a role other than that of “minister of the word,” that is, a coworker in the gospel in the usual sense of fellow evangelizer or helper in church planting. Perhaps, he was the team’s doctor. More attention should be paid to the fact that Paul sometimes practiced his trade as he traveled from city to city, and perhaps some of his traveling companions did as well. It is quite possible that Luke lived in Troas of perhaps Philippi and traveled back and forth between those cities. This would account for the brief us or we passages during Paul’s Second Missionary Journey, and why they occur just where they do. We would then have to assume that by the time of the Third Missionary Journey, Luke had agreed to travel with the group for a more extended period of time.\(^{367}\)

Yeshua, You have taught me in Your Word that no wisdom, no understanding, and no counsel will prevail against You (Proverbs 21:30). May I never be guilty of choosing my personal preferences and inclinations over Your clear guidance. And when I am unsure about Your specific directions, may I be willing to wait for You, knowing that You give me my food at the right time. And when You give it to me, I gather it, when You open Your hand, I will be satisfied with good (Psalm 104:27-28).\(^{368}\)