

## Shepherds of the Flock ~ Part 1

### 1 Kefa 5:1-7

In my last post, we explored the topic of **Suffering As A Believer** in **1 Kefa 4:12-19**. In this post, **Kefa** closes his first letter by offering encouragement to the **Shepherds of the Flock** in **1 Kefa 5:1-7**.

***<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge the congregation leaders among you, as a fellow-leader and witness to the Messiah's sufferings, as well as a sharer in the glory to be revealed:***

**Kefa** writes **the congregation leaders** (elders) humbly, **as a fellow-leader**, not as a superior, even though he personally was a **witness to the Messiah's sufferings**. **Elders**, older and wiser men skilled in judging cases, ruled in most Israelite towns in the **Tanakh**. In the Brit Hadashah, **elders** held a respected place in the synagogues, from which the churches took over this form of leadership.

**Sha'ul** writes about **the glory to be revealed**: **"I don't think the sufferings we are going through now are even worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us in the future."** ~ Romans 8:18.

***<sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is in your care, exercising oversight not out of constraint, but willingly, as God wants; and not out of a desire for dishonest gain, but with enthusiasm;***

Kefa is faithfully transmitting **Yeshua's** command to him to **shepherd the flock** in Yochanan 21:16 by **exercising oversight ... willingly**. Some **elders** take too little responsibility so that their congregations remain undisciplined.

The image of a **shepherd** is that of a concerned guide, not of a severe ruler (although shepherds' image had been applied to rulers in parts of the ancient Near East). Charges of illegitimate gain were often made against moral teachers in the ancient world, and **Believers** needed to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. (Like certain officials in the Jewish community, these **Messianic** leaders distributed the funds for the poor.) <sup>1</sup>

***<sup>3</sup> also not as machers domineering over those in your care, but as people who become examples to the flock.***

If it is true that the **Messiah** wants followers who will follow, He also wants leaders who will lead - but **not as machers**. The word **macher** is Yiddish for *"big shot, real operator,"* with the overtone of trying to take charge; the perfect example is **Diotrephes** in **3 Yochanan 9-10**. <sup>2</sup>

***<sup>4</sup> Then, when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive glory as your unfading crown.***

In ancient texts, a **chief shepherd** appears to have been an overseer of a group of other **shepherds**, although they were usually not well-to-do themselves. **Crowns** were garlands given to victors of athletic contests, benefactors, or other heroes, and they were perishable; those faithful to Yeshua would receive an imperishable crown. <sup>3</sup>

***<sup>5</sup> Likewise, you who are less experienced submit to leaders. Further, all of you should clothe yourselves in humility toward one another because:***

***"God opposes the arrogant,***

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<sup>1</sup> The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Jewish New Testament Commentary.

<sup>3</sup> The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament

*but to the humble, he gives grace."*

**Elders** have special responsibilities to tend the **flock**, but they must watch the spirit in which they do it. Younger men must submit to **elders**, and both groups must develop the grace of humility, which is the only befitting attitude before God.

*<sup>6</sup> Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that at the right time, He may lift you up.*

Following on **Proverbs 3:34**, cited in **1 Kefa 5:5**, **Kefa** urges believers to **humble** themselves before God. In the **Tanakh**, this idea often meant repenting, sometimes when facing impending judgment or learning one's complete dependence on God. Here the sense includes embracing and accepting the suffering until God provides the way out (cf. Jer. 27:11).

*<sup>7</sup> Throw all your anxieties upon Him because He cares about you.*

Although the promise of complete relief from persecution is in the future, **Kefa** encourages **Believers** to pray and trust **God's** love for them in the present. **Jews** learned to see **God's** love in **Isra'el's** sufferings as disciplines of love. Still, most pagans, who bartered sacrifices and vows to get benefactions from the gods, had difficulty with this concept.

We know that the Creator and Ruler of the universe cares about us.

In my next post, we will conclude our study of **1 Kefa** by examining the conclusion and final greeting in **Shepherds of the Flock ~ Part 2** in **1 Kefa 5:8-13**.