

## Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 189

### Ephesians – Part 9

**Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.**

#### Exhortation Regarding Personal Relationships

In the following passages, **Sha'ul** emphasizes mutual submission. If you're feeling tension in your home, consider initiating a family meeting where every member can share their feelings without interruption. This creates an atmosphere of love and respect, allowing everyone to express their needs. Aim to serve one another by prioritizing your family's well-being, whether that means helping with chores, lending an ear, or simply spending quality time together. By practicing humility and openness, you can dispel conflict and cultivate a closer-knit family.

#### Mutual Submission

**5 <sup>21</sup> Submit to one another in fear of the Messiah.**

This verse serves as a hinge to connect what is prior (our last post) with what follows in this post.

**<sup>22</sup> Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord; <sup>23</sup> because the husband is head of the wife, just as the Messiah, as head of the Messianic Community, is himself the one who keeps the body safe. <sup>24</sup> Just as the Messianic Community submits to the Messiah, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

**Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord** (compare 1 Corinthians 11:3). **As for husbands, love your wives** (verse 25 below). The asymmetry in the commands epitomizes the asymmetry in the marriage relationship. **Sha'ul** could have written, "**Wives, love your husbands,**" and "**Husbands, rule your wives.**" But men often find it all too easy to throw their weight around, but hard to communicate love sensitively, in a self-giving fashion—for the standard **Sha'ul** sets is very high, **just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community.**

Elsewhere, **Sha'ul** says that **"the head of a wife is her husband"** (1 Corinthians 11:3). Being the head, he is responsible for going first, to create the order of married life. But to do this, he must be loving **first**, unconditionally, without waiting for or insisting on his **wife's** submitting first.

**<sup>25</sup> As for husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community, indeed, gave himself up on its behalf,**

**Sha'ul** turned to the duties of **husbands**. The society in which **Sha'ul** wrote recognized the responsibilities of **wives** to **husbands** but not necessarily of **husbands** to **wives**. As in Colossians 3:19, **Sha'ul** exhorted **husbands** to love their **wives**, but **Ephesians** presents **Yeshua's** self-sacrificing love for the **Kehilah** as the pattern for the **husband's** love for his **wife**. **Husbands** are to love their **wives** continually as **Yeshua** loves the **Kehilah**. The tense of the **Greek** word translated "love" indicates a love that continues. Love is more than family affection or sexual passion. Instead, it is a deliberate attitude leading to action that concerns itself with another's well-being. A **husband** should love his **wife**: (1) as **Yeshua** loved the **Kehilah** (vv. 25–27); (2) as his own body (vv. 28–30); and (3) with a love transcending all other human relationships (vv. 31–33).

*<sup>26</sup> in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the mikveh, so to speak,*

A **Jewish** bride enters the **mikveh** (ritual bath) in order to be purified prior to the marriage ceremony, which is called **kiddushin** (literally, “being *set apart for God*”).

*<sup>27</sup> in order to present the Messianic Community to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without defect. <sup>28</sup> This is how husbands ought to love their wives—like their own bodies; for the man who loves his wife is loving himself.*

Since **husbands are to love** their **wives** as **Yeshua** loved the **Kehilah**, they give up their personal rights for the good of their **wives**. It is a solemn picture of covenant love.

*<sup>29</sup> Why, no one ever hated his own flesh! On the contrary, he feeds it well and takes care of it, just as the Messiah does the Messianic Community, <sup>30</sup> because we are parts of his Body.*

On first sight, **Sha’ul** seems to have descended from the lofty standard of **Yeshua’s** love to the low standard of self-love when he says **no one ever hates his own flesh**, but he reminded **Messianic** couples of their oneness, their “one-flesh” relationship. For this reason, a **husband’s** obligation to cherish his **wife** as he does his own body is more than a helpful guide. His sacrificial love is an expression of the sacred marital union. True love is evidenced when **husbands** and **wives** have this spiritual, emotional, and physical oneness.

*<sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and remain with his wife, and the two will become one.” (Genesis 2:24) <sup>32</sup> There is profound truth hidden here, which I say concerns the Messiah and the Messianic Community.*

**Sha’ul** appealed to Genesis 2:24, which is **God’s** initial statement in the Scriptures regarding marriage. The marriage commitment takes precedence over every other human relationship.

*<sup>33</sup> However, the text also applies to each of you individually: let each man love his wife as he does himself, and see that the wife respects her husband.*

## Parent-Child Relationships

*<sup>6</sup> <sup>1</sup> Children, what you should do in union with the Lord is obey your parents, for this is right.*

*<sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment that embodies a promise—<sup>3</sup> “so that it may go well with you, and you may live long in the Land.” (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16)*

*<sup>4</sup> Fathers, don’t irritate your children and make them resentful; instead, raise them with the Lord’s kind of discipline and guidance.*

Parents have the responsibility both to discipline and to instruct their children. **Sha’ul** indicated that **fathers** are to take the lead in this responsibility. Parents are not to **stir up anger** in their children. Discipline is not to be arbitrary or something done out of anger.

## Master-Servant Attitudes

*<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your human masters with the same fear, trembling, and single-heartedness with which you obey the Messiah. <sup>6</sup> Don’t obey just to win their favor, serving only when they are watching you; but serve as slaves of the Messiah, doing what God wants with all your heart.*

*<sup>7</sup> Work willingly as slaves, as people do who are serving not merely human beings but the Lord.*

*<sup>8</sup> Remember that whoever does good work, whether he be a slave or a free man, will be rewarded by the Lord.*

***<sup>9</sup> And masters, treat your slaves the same way. Don't threaten them. Remember that in heaven, both you and they have the same Master, and he has no favorites.***<sup>1</sup>

With the necessary changes, these verses apply to employer-employee relationships. The **Brit Hadashah**, as well as the **Tanakh**, includes guidelines for **slaves** and **slavery**. These guidelines do not condone **slavery**, but provide ethical guidance for times and places where **slavery** existed. **Sha'ul's** claim that **slaves** and **masters** are equal before **God** would have shocked his contemporaries. Where the **Roman** law unfairly discriminated between **master** and **slave**, heavenly law does not. **Sha'ul's** words in this context provided groundwork for a new sense of brotherhood between races, which were later used to help inspire the **anti-slavery** movement.

In our next post, we continue to examine **Sha'ul's Letter to the Ephesians**.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 5:21-6:9.