

## Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 201

### 1 Timothy – Part 4

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

### Instructions for the Kehillah ~ Part 4

#### Qualifications of Elders

Believers and non-believers alike can judge congregational leaders by these criteria.

**3<sup>1</sup> Here is a statement you can trust: anyone aspiring to be a congregation leader is seeking worthwhile work. <sup>2</sup>A congregation leader must be above reproach, he must be faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable, and able to teach.**

**Faithful to his wife**, literally, “husband of one wife,” so that most of the discussion about this phrase has assumed its concern is not fidelity but numbers—at most one, at least one, or exactly one? Or at most one at a time?

**At least one.** No one seriously proposes this. Jacob, David and Solomon notwithstanding, polygamy would conflict with **Sha'ul's** teaching at 1 Corinthians 7:2 and with Yeshua's at Mt 19:3–9, where he cites God's original pattern as the model: “A man should be united with his wife,” not with his wives, “and the two,” not the many, “are to become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

**Exactly one:** a leader must be a married man. This fits well with the Jewish saying that a man without a wife is only half a man (a different application of Genesis 2:24).

**At most one at a time.** This is possible; the question is whether leaders may remarry after divorce or only after being widowed. Considering the two permitted reasons given in the New Testament for divorce, fornication (Mattyahu 19:9) and desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15), one may argue that it includes remarriage after divorce for those specific reasons. But then the standard for leaders is no different from that of other believers, so why mention it?

**<sup>3</sup> He must not drink excessively or get into fights; instead, he must be kind and gentle. He must not be a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, having children who obey him with all proper respect; <sup>5</sup> for if a man can't manage his own household, how will he be able to care for God's Messianic Community?**

**Having children who obey him** (a weaker requirement than at Titus 1:6). As at v. 2, does this mean a leader must have children? Or, rather, if he has children, they should be obedient and not unruly, so that his **household** sets an example for the congregation? The latter is the usual interpretation. A reasonable inference is that family comes before ministry. **If a man can't manage his own household, how will he be able to care for God's Messianic community?** One can turn this into a positive statement: a pastor gains valuable job experience raising his children.

**<sup>6</sup> He must not be a new believer, because he might become puffed up with pride and thus fall under the same judgment as did the Adversary. <sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he must be well regarded by outsiders, so that he won't fall into disgrace and into the Adversary's trap.**

Reflecting on 1 Timothy 3:1-7, think about the importance of reputation. If you're facing conflict with another member in the church, take a step back to evaluate how others may perceive your behavior. Commit to initiating a candid but loving conversation with that person. Approach them not with blame, but with the desire for reconciliation and unity, seeking to repair the breach and rebuild trust, embodying the qualities described in Scripture.

## Qualifications of Deacons

<sup>8</sup> **Likewise, the shamashim** (Deacons) **must be of good character, people whose word can be trusted. They must not give themselves to excessive drinking or be greedy for dishonest gain.**  
<sup>9</sup> **They must possess the formerly hidden truth of the faith with a clean conscience.** <sup>10</sup> **And first, let them be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them be appointed shamashim.**  
<sup>11</sup> **Similarly, the wives must be of good character, not gossips, but temperate, faithful in everything.**

**Greek gunaikas** can mean either **wives** or **women.** If the former, **Sha'ul** is taking for granted that only men can be **shamashim** and is predinating their service on their **wives'** good behavior. But if the meaning is **women,** he is allowing that the office of **shamash** can be filled by women as well as men. In Romans 16:1, **Sha'ul** calls **Phoebe** a **shamash;** his use of the masculine form of the **Greek** word "**diakonos**" suggests that he is in fact referring to the office and not just describing her as a worker. Against this idea stands v. 12, which says that a **shamash must be faithful to his wife** (see v. 2) but says nothing about her being faithful to her husband (compare 1 Timothy 5:9). However, this can be explained as brevity of expression, or as a statement of the rule for the more frequent case.

<sup>12</sup> **Let the shamashim each be faithful to his wife, managing his children and household well.**  
<sup>13</sup> **For those who serve well as shamashim gain good standing for themselves and much boldness in the trust that comes through Yeshua the Messiah.** <sup>1</sup>

This verse highlights the value and importance of the office of deacon by stating two results of exemplary service in this role. **Good standing** refers to respect and appreciation from the **Kehilah** toward those who serve the **Kehilah** in this way. **Much boldness** probably refers to the increase in confidence in the faith that comes from serving and seeing the truths of the Gospel proven in ministry.

As a leader or active church member, you may feel the burden of setting the right example for others. Remember that the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 are not just for deacons but can guide anyone. Assess your current behavior and find one area to improve, such as being more uplifting or wise in your speech. This week, focus on using your words to encourage at least three people in your church community, reflecting on the good character **Paul** describes.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1-13.