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## **Brit Hadasha: Paul and Avoiding Genealogies**

We have heard the question asked in anti-missionary circles, “Why is Paul so anxious for you to not study the genealogies?”

They often then go on to cite 1 Timothy 1:4 and Titus 3:9-11 as source texts. Here they are.

### **1 Timothy 1:4 (ESV)**

*nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

### **Titus 3:9-11 (ESV)**

*But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

By asking this question they seem to be indicating that Paul is trying to hide something, that maybe one’s genealogy really does matter.

We freely admit there are times that one’s genealogy does matter.

For example, only a son of Aaron from the Tribe of Levi can be a priest on earth, and the Messiah, he had to come through the line of David. In such instances one’s genetic disposition does matter. However, that isn’t what Paul was referring to in 1 Timothy or Titus 3.

If we take just a moment to look at the context of the verses they use, we will see that Paul isn’t anxious about studying genealogies. He has a very different purpose.

### **1 Timothy 1:3-7 (ESV)**

*As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion,*

desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Do you see that with a little greater context Paul isn't anxious about speaking about genealogies, he is indicating they are unimportant to their good work. He actually specifically gives his reason for saying it in the same verse.

### **1 Timothy 1:4 (ESV)**

nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, **which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.**

In verse 3 Paul starts his list of three things that he had wanted Timothy to do while in Ephesus. They were:

- 1.) charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine
- 2.) charge those same persons not to devote themselves to myths
- 3.) charge those same persons not to devote themselves to endless genealogies

Paul then continues in verse 5 to remind Timothy of their goal, their purpose.

### **1 Timothy 1:5 (ESV)**

The aim of our charge is **love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.**

So the purpose of Timothy being in Ephesus was to help keep the congregation from being swayed by others who were teaching a different doctrine than that of love issuing from a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith.

Let's continue on to verses 6 and 7 just as Paul does.

### **1 Timothy 1:6-7 (ESV)**

Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

The same people who in verses 3 and 4 were teaching a different doctrine and devoting themselves to myths and endless genealogies were swerving away from the goal from verse 5. Instead of focusing on the love of the Creator and living a life of faith and good conscience, they were having vain discussions about myths and genealogies and trying to teach the Torah.

They did not have the understandings necessary to teach what they were trying to teach. The result was that they were wasting time speculating about things they didn't understand instead of focusing on the truth of YHWH.

Where do we get that it was a waste of time? From Paul himself when he said they “**wandered away into vain discussion**”.

Paul used this word that today is translated into vain: G3150 ματαιολογία mataiologia. Strong's and Thayer's Lexicons define this word as: random talk, babble, vain or empty talking.

So why is Paul against the discussions of genealogies in 1 Timothy? Because they were pointless discussions that took away from the more important matters, love and the truth of the Word of YHWH. There is nothing Paul is trying to hide here nor does he appear to be anxious.

The use of 1 Timothy 1:4 doesn't appear to be much of a help for the anti-missionary argument as it is only pointing us back to the importance of the Word instead of discussions that bear no fruit. But what about Titus 3?

Again, Titus 3:9-11

**Titus 3:9-11 (ESV)**

But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Verse 9 reinforces what we saw in the letter to Timothy. Arguments about genealogies are unprofitable and worthless. They do not bear good fruit. Why is this important? We need to go back to the beginning of chapter 3 to get a clearer picture of the passage.

**Titus 3:1-11 (ESV)**

**Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ (Yeshua HaMashiach) our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

In the first three verses we see how a large part of this section is against doing things the way of the world. As followers of Messiah we must be different from them, doing good works and being loving.

This is just what we talked about in the 1 Timothy verses.

We shouldn't spend our time quarreling, having foolish discussions or envying others. We need to be loving YHWH and loving our neighbors; we need to stay strong in our faith in the Word through which we shall receive our salvation.

What happens when we take our focus off of the Word and turn it, instead, upon worthless things? We start dividing and quarreling amongst ourselves. Even today we see arguments over how to say the name of the Creator and the Messiah among many other topics.

We wish we could even say that was the extent of our divisions; sadly that isn't so. There exists divisions relating to the color of Messiah's skin, whether or not a person has Hebrew DNA, or which teacher has more "truth" over another. The same was true in Paul's day; he told the Corinthians that he was glad he didn't baptize them, because they were quarreling about that. It didn't matter who baptized them, all should only be following the Messiah, not a single person.

Messiah said the same thing in Matthew 23 when He told us to call no one teacher. It isn't about the man, it's about the Word. Even with all of those examples of points of division, it still isn't the extent of the division we see in the body today; we could go on but it would be a worthless discussion.

We do want to make something clear though. There is a difference between having a discussion and having an argument, especially one that leads to division. We should discuss Scripture with one another and test each other's understandings, at least to a certain degree.

### **1 John 4:1 (ESV)**

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

### **Proverbs 27:17 (ESV)**

Iron sharpens iron,  
and one man sharpens another

Without good discussions, even passionate discussions, we would not be able to really sharpen one another with the Word. However, there comes a point in a discussion when it ceases to be a discussion and becomes an argument. When does this happen? Honestly, it happens when a person's intent changes.

A discussion is simply a dialogue between two people on a given topic. In many cases both sides are talking about ideas they have or are sharing their understandings, often in trying to come to a truth. A discussion can even have passion; passion is not bad. When passion becomes the point, the trouble begins.

The argument begins when at least one of the involved parties ceases to simply share ideas and begins to "convince" the other party that their own personal views are the correct one. When a person has this shift in their mindset they are rarely open to being wrong and insist that the other party is. At that point the fruitful discussion ceases and the worthless argument begins.

In an argument, each side is correct in their own eyes and the other party is misguided, deceived, or stupid. The individual has stopped pursuing the truth and begins to assert their own truth. If one is not willing to test, then no good can be gained.

These are the things that were happening in Paul's time and we still see them today. It becomes less about what the actual truth is and more about a personal belief. And if you happen to disagree with that person's belief it's not uncommon for them to take offense and then it only escalates from there.

It's important to remember that in all of Paul's letters he is addressing specific people with specific situations; he is responding to something he has been told. There is nothing in the Torah that discourages having a conversation or even discussing the most divisive topics. Discussion is good and as stated earlier in Proverbs, it sharpens us. The problem is people, and when as people, we let our

emotions get too involved in the discussion, it's easy to let it become an argument and arguments have little worth.

In Paul's day, too often importance was placed upon a person based upon where they come from, who they studied under, etc. Paul addressed this with himself in Philippians 3 and how if someone had a "right" to be puffed up it was himself.

### **Philippians 3:4-6 (ESV)**

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet all of that means nothing compared to having the truth and faith in the Word. He continues in verses seven through nine.

### **Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV)**

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ (Messiah). Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus (Yeshua HaMashiach) my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (Messiah).

Paul saw that the true value was not in his credentials be it through DNA or training, but instead through following the Messiah. The true value was knowing Messiah, living how He lived, doing what He did. The true value is having faith in Messiah and living out the Torah.

Discussions about genealogies, myths, foolish controversies, and quarrels about the Torah are worthless. They are worthless because such things are not be pivotal to our faith in terms of our salvation. We are all one body but we all know only in part, no one has the whole truth.

These are the reasons Paul said not to argue about genealogies according to the context given to us in 1 Timothy and Titus 3. Such discussions are worthless, they take our focus off of the Word, and lead us to division. As a body we are to be united, not divided.

Remember, there was the native born Israelite and the foreigners who sojourned with them. Any sojourner who wished to follow YHWH was permitted to and they were to be treated no differently than the native born citizen. This was all made clear in the Torah time and time again.

YHWH did not see any difference between them, they were all His people. If the Creator doesn't see a difference based upon race or genealogies, then why should we? Why should we spend our time focused on individual genealogies, foolish controversies, etc. that do nothing to edify the body or bring glory to YHWH? Frankly, we shouldn't.

That is the message Paul was bringing. All who desire to follow after YHWH and His ways are grafted together into one people regardless of race, gender, or station in life.

Paul was not trying to hide some great secret relating to the importance of genealogies, nor was he attempting to dismiss it when it related to important things like who could be a Levitical priest or as it pertained to fulfilling prophecy. Those were not issues he was addressing in his letters to Timothy and Titus.

Like all of his letters, Paul is responding to specific situations occurring in specific places. His words were not random, they were directed to address certain things. Those things are the context in which they should be understood instead of being cherry picked and questioned for a hidden motive to devalue a person or people.

There is nothing in the passages presented that show that Paul was anxious about the topic of genealogies; we never see where Paul backs down from an issue or tries to hide the truth of the Creator. Instead we see him defending the Word of YHWH and teaching others the importance of following it and living a righteous life before their Creator.

We hope that this teaching has blessed.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

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**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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