

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE

VOLUME I

the TORAH

Jay Carper

A verse-by-verse analysis of marriage and family in the Bible

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About the Book

A Commentary on Marriage in the Bible is a multi-volume work analyzing the treatment of marriage and family in the Bible. It begins with Genesis 1:1 and progresses to Revelation 22:21, picking out nearly every pertinent verse along the way. It is the result of a layman's research project that has spanned more than ten years so far, including countless hours of study and prayer. Although the author has attempted to set aside bias—whether religious, cultural, or merely personal—in order to convey accurately what the prophets of God actually recorded and what their words mean for us today, his Messianic Jewish theology and devout evangelical Christian upbringing has infused this work with a unique perspective. The contents are controversial, and every single reader is certain to find something with which to disagree vehemently. Conversely, readers of every theological persuasion, Jewish, Christian, or other, are also certain to find much of value as they read with an open mind and heart.

Volume I comments on the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, and provides an essential foundation to the information in later volumes.

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Introduction

I began this work in 1997 when I read something by James Stivers—I cannot even remember what that was now—in which he asserted that God approves of polygyny. My own feeling had always been that God disapproves, but tolerates (tolerated?) it among those converted from a polygamous culture. I probably adopted that sense from the many Sunday sermons and Wednesday night Bible studies I attended as a child. My opinion was also likely affected by my incessant reading (sometimes during church) of science fiction, fantasy, and historical novels. Robert Heinlein deserves a mention here somewhere, I am sure. In any case, Stivers' reasoning appeared sound, but I was certain that he must have overlooked some important point. I checked his Scripture references in context and checked cross-references. Since he has a penchant for pushing the boundaries of orthodoxy, I researched opposing views and checked their Scriptural references as well. By the time I had accumulated more than one hundred pages of Bible passages (paraphrased to aid my own understanding) and typed notes, I was convinced: Stivers was correct. Not only is most of today's church incorrect about polygyny, but they are dead wrong about a whole host of issues related to marriage and family.

This is big news! I thought. People need to know about this! The problem, as I soon discovered, was that people did not *want* to know about it. We have built so much of our culture around the dogma of monogamy that any challenge to the status quo is met with the fiercest opposition. Men become incredulous and sidle furtively away as if afraid of being seen even standing too near such a heresy. Women become violently angry or break down in tears. I pulled my hand back from the fire and reassessed what I ought to do with this newfound knowledge. The implications went far beyond whether a man might have one or two wives. The very structure of modern civilization was at odds with what the Bible seemed to be saying. I could not simply shrug my shoulders and move on to something else. The ensuing search for truth and the path that unfolded over the next eleven years lit a fire in my bones that, like Jeremiah's, simply will not allow me to keep silent.

My writing was fitful. For weeks, I might research and write for more than eight hours per day while also working a full time job. For months, I might write just a few words here and there. I was always writing in the back of my mind, however, ideas and arguments brewing and stewing incessantly while I pulled network cables or installed software. I spent hundreds of hours in online forums, forced constantly to question my conclusions and myself. The intensive Bible studies pulled me ever further from my religious roots with the Assemblies of God into...something. I had no name for the theology that was developing.

At a gathering of polygamy-friendly believers in Utah, I met a very intelligent individual (and his two wives) who seemed to be saying the same things I had been thinking. I learned that he lived within a half-hour's drive of my home in Colorado and that he attended a congregation made up of people with very similar beliefs, which he referred to as Messianic Judaism. They were merely poly-tolerant, though, he informed me, not necessarily poly-friendly. My wife and I visited his congregation

for *midrash*, a weekly Bible study focused on the Torah. We were immediately enthralled by the depth of instruction and the many facets of the Scriptures to which we had never been exposed growing up in evangelical, protestant churches. There is so much more in those first five books than the Ten Commandments and a collection of genealogies! I spent the next seven years absorbing whatever I could from the teachers there. (They most certainly do not agree with everything I have written in this book!) They fleshed out my inklings into full-fledged theology and sometimes even understanding. So many loose ends from my earlier religious instruction began coming together, untangling a mass of inconsistencies and answering a host of Whys, even while posing even more. My writing took on a new tenor and wholeness as the Torah opened up. The result is that I produced a book with a distinctly messianic perspective. I do not consider myself a Messianic Jew because, as far as I am aware, I am not Jewish. For now, I have settled on the label of messianic believer. (Labels do not define us, but they help us sort out a very complex world.) I am a believer in Yeshua, also known as Jesus. He is the one and only path to eternal salvation. You cannot earn your way to Heaven by doing good works or by obeying a set of rules. However, I also believe that the Torah contains God's instructions to all people concerning how we are to live and worship. Israel was merely a vehicle for those instructions.

Do not take all of this to mean that one must subscribe to Messianic Jewish theology to understand this book or find value in it. Some things will sound more natural or make more immediate sense to the Messianic, but I have struggled to write artfully, clearly, and accessibly for all readers of whatever persuasion.

I have no outstanding qualifications for this work. In fact, I have barely any qualifications at all. I have no degree in theology. I have very little formal training. I am not a pastor or a rabbi. I am only an occasional teacher. I do not claim to be a prophet or a great man of God. I studied and prayed and wrote, and I am certain that I made mistakes. Whatever truth I have written, I have done so by God's grace. Whatever error, I have done so because of my own inadequacies and interference in God's attempts at communicating through me.

Throughout these years, I have had the support of many friends, some of whom did not even agree with many of the things I wrote. In fact, virtually everyone who picks up this volume will find something with which to dislike intensely, myself included. I have also gained some enemies, which was a fairly new experience for me. There are some hard truths on these pages, and some people will not accept them easily or at all. I have lost family, friends, and finances over this work, including my wife of seventeen years. I realize the irony of a divorced man writing a book on marriage. My only defense is that I was once much more a fool than I am today, and change did not come easily. I learned much about human nature, about God's design for marriage and family, and the relationship between man and woman, but it was too little, too late. Or too much, too quickly. Fortunately, this is not a book on how to be married or how to solve your marital problems. My only purpose in writing was to discover what God actually says about marriage and family and to present it to the world at large. Accept it or not. Do with it what you will.

I have organized this volume according to the books of the Bible first, and according to the traditional weekly Torah readings second. For thousands of years,

Jewish synagogues have kept roughly the same annual schedule, all reading the same section or *parsha* each Shabbat. For the most part, Messianic congregations have continued that tradition. I believe that this division was divinely inspired as the salvation message can be found in some form in every single portion, although many rabbis today would fail to recognize it as such or admit it if they did. I list each *parsha* by its Hebrew name and corresponding verses.

You might notice that the first chapter, on Genesis, is the longest and contains the most detailed comments and footnotes. Genesis is the foundation for all that comes after. Everything in Scripture is based on what came before. The New Testament letters build on The Acts of the Apostles, which builds on the Gospels, which build on the Prophets and Writings, which build on the Torah, which builds on Genesis. Each layer expands, rather than replaces, the layer beneath. The first and second comings of the Messiah, the salvation message, the history of Israel...they are all covered in some form in Genesis. Yeshua and Paul both based their fundamental teachings concerning marriage on Genesis, and so have I.

This book is the first volume in what I intend to be a two or three volume set. It is a verse-by-verse commentary, and I did not write it to be read from cover to cover, though you may do so if you wish. The second volume will comment on the remaining Old Testament writings and prophets. It might contain comments on the New Testament as well, or those might find their way into a third volume. After that, I might go on to discuss marriage as it appears in other ancient Christian and Jewish writings.

A final note...

One hard lesson I learned while writing this book was that people do not learn hard lessons easily. It takes time and patience, and people, if pushed too far or fast, will reliably rebel. Be very cautious with these ideas and do not force them on others. Be even more cautious with incorporating these ideas into your family life. Our western cultures have drifted very far from God's original plan, and restoration will be difficult. Families will be destroyed. People will be hurt. I wish to God that was not the case, but it always is with profound truths. I want you to understand that excising evil is painful. People do not readily change. The return will not be pleasant, but return we will.

-Jay Carper
February 24, 2009

May you proceed prayerfully in full understanding that we—Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female—are a part of the same body under the Messiah, having been joined to it solely through the grace of God, and may each be convinced or not as the Spirit leads him.

COMMENTARY ON MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE

VOLUME I: THE TORAH

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JAY CARPER

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GENESIS – *Bereishit*

Bereishit: Genesis 1:1-6:8

Genesis 1:22

(See Genesis 1:28.)

Genesis 1:26

Let us make man in our image... Since Yeshua said, “God is a Spirit” and not flesh, we are a spiritual likeness of God and only allegorically a physical likeness. Our physical bodies are analogs of our spirits, designed to work solely within the physical realm, while God designed our spirits to work in the spiritual realm. The two realms are united in mankind.

Genesis 1:27

In the image of God created he him. Adam was created first, and was the only human being besides Yeshua to have been created in God’s image.¹ All others bear God’s image, but are created in Adam’s. Moses made no mistakes in his choice of words. He did not write, “In the image of God created he *them*,” but he wrote, “In the image of God created he *him*,” adding the creation of *them* (plural) as male and female as a distinct thought.

So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God
created he him; male and female created he them.

Tom Shipley points out that, while mankind may be collectively referred to as Adam, only the first man is ever called Adam as an individual.² Throughout Genesis 1 and 2, when Moses referred to the individual characters, he referred to the man as *Adam* and to the woman as *Ishshaw*.

While all of mankind bears the image of God, woman is the image of man in the same way that a child is the image of his parents. Together, in their procreative capacity they image the *creative* nature of God.³ Both together and separately, in their spiritual and familial roles they image other aspects of God. In 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 Paul told us that, although God is the source of us all and that mankind as a whole bears the image of God, men more specifically are that image: “...he is the

¹ I do not mean to imply that Yeshua is a mere created being. However, his physical body was unquestionably created. He did not materialize in Mary’s womb as a fully grown man, but grew from a few cells to a fully formed infant, just as all other men do.

² Tom Shipley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Law* (Baltimore, Maryland: Institute for Christian Patriarchy, 2001, 2004.) 19.

³ James Stivers wrote, “The glory of God is His creative power. The glory of God, as it is manifested in the man, is his procreative power. God surrounds Himself with a Host (“LORD of Hosts”)....A man may image his Creator all of his life, but he does not begin to manifest the Creator’s glory until he enters into fatherhood.” James Wesley Stivers, *Hierogamy and the Married Messiah*. (Moscow, Idaho: Stivers Publications, 2004.)

image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.”

The Hebrew words used for male and female in v27 are somewhat illustrative. According to *Strong's*, *zakar*, the Hebrew for male, means “remembered,” which one could suppose might stem from Adam’s being reminiscent of God. *Nekebah*, the Hebrew for female, is derived from *nekeb* or *nakab*, and is a more functionally oriented word and describes more of who the woman is rather than who she resembles.

God has no physical gender other than that of the Messiah’s human form, but his superior authority requires that he almost always be referred to in the masculine. *He* promised the Messiah and *he* gave the Torah. *He* died and *he* rose again. *He* guides us and *he* comforts us. God is neither female nor feminine, yet he still has something of the feminine within him; else how could Eve have been created from Adam, who was created in the image of God? While God has no sex and it is certainly incorrect to refer to him as “she,” the roles of wife and mother can be discerned in certain aspects of God. When the first part of the substance of Eve was extracted from Adam, most of the feminine and something of the masculine, both of which he had inherited from God, were put into Eve. Both men and women have masculine and feminine attributes, and in this they both bear God’s image, but men more directly.

This is not a statement of the intrinsic worth of men over women or of women over men.⁴ They both created in the image of God, and they are both essential to God’s plan. Would it make any sense to ask whether the sergeant or the lieutenant is more important to the plans of the general? Of course not. One has authority over the other, but they are both essential to victory. The lieutenant who believes he can effectively perform the sergeant’s duties in addition to his own is a fool, and so is the sergeant who believes that he can do the same. The woman is subordinate to the man the way the heart and lungs are subordinate to the head. Without heart and lungs, the head is of very little use. The subordination of one to the other is functional and not a matter derived from worth or importance.

Genesis 1:28

And God blessed them, and God said unto them... The foremost question I want to answer concerning this verse is: “To what extent are we required by God to ‘be fruitful and multiply?’” I see three ways to argue the point:

1. *God blessed us with fruitfulness, but did not necessarily command us to multiply.*

The proximity of “God blessed” and “God said” (“And God blessed them, and God said unto them...”) appear to make the two clauses parts of a single act. God said “Be fruitful and multiply” two other times, once to the animals in v22 and once to Noah and his family in 9:1. All three times the statement was intimately linked to

⁴ Stephen B. Clark points out that subordinates are very often more valuable to the success of a venture than are their superiors. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1980.) 23-24.

a blessing. Therefore, the phrase “Be fruitful and multiply” is merely a blessing much as we might say, “Get well soon,” to a sick friend. The problem with this argument is that there is a vital difference between the way that God blessed the fish and birds and the way that he blessed mankind. In v22, he does not appear to be speaking *to* the animals so much as *over* the animals: “God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply...” which could be reworded as “God blessed them *by* saying...” However, in the verse currently under consideration, Moses wrote “God blessed them, and God said unto them...” implying a qualitative difference in the nature of the blessing,⁵ as well as a logical division between the blessing and the “command.” But is this difference enough to make a command? In Genesis 14:19-20, Melchizedek blessed Abram in very similar words, but gave no command, following the pattern of v22 and strengthening the idea that this instance in v28 is also only a blessing and no command at all.

2. *God categorically commanded mankind to be fruitful and multiply.*

The qualitative difference demonstrated above, namely that God spoke directly to mankind and that the name “Elohim” is repeated as the subject of both clauses, certainly seems to support this interpretation. *Elohim* is Hebrew for “judges” or “rulers” and so it appears that, by repeating the name of the Creator, Moses was emphasizing the authority with which God spoke. The command is valid until the Kingdom in which men will become like the angels and no longer lawfully procreate. (At least that is the commonly accepted interpretation of Matthew 22:30.) However, it must still be understood that this is a command to mankind in general and not to each and every individual. Obviously, we cannot ascribe guilt to those whom Yeshua and Paul commended for their celibacy, nor to those whom God has made barren for his own purposes.

3. *God commanded mankind to be fruitful and multiply, but only to a certain point.*

God commanded us to multiply, but if the purpose of the command was to enable mankind to effectively govern the earth⁶, a point might come (or might have already come) at which further multiplication becomes *unfruitful*. “Replenish the earth” is an integral part of the command to multiply, so once we have populated the earth, the command may be considered fulfilled. This is the argument of the environmentalist who favors zero or negative population growth (and commonly

⁵ The same Hebrew word, *amar*, is used in v22 for “saying” and in v28 for “said unto them.” The King James Version does not have “unto them” italicized, so it does not appear to be an insertion by the translators. I have assumed that the difference may be one of declension or case that cannot be directly translated into English. To the contrary, two Hebrew scholars have told me that there is no difference in the Hebrew, and “unto them” was an extrapolation on the part of the KJV translators. Brenton’s translation from the Septuagint agrees that the English should read “God blessed them, saying...” This lends more weight to the idea that God was blessing mankind with fertility rather than commanding them to be fruitful.

⁶ Although I doubt that he would have openly supported the idea which I wrote next, this is the view promoted by Rushdoony: “The meaning of the family is thus not to be sought in procreation but in a God-centered authority and responsibility in terms of man’s calling to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over it.” Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973.) 164.

also favors abortion and coercive measures to discourage growth, but these negative and ungodly attitudes are not inherent in the argument). Although most theologians and men of God whom I respect believe this is not the case, I am not convinced either way. As will be seen in the next section on “subdue it” and in the comments for Genesis 2, governance of the earth is at least a major part of the purpose for man’s creation, so this argument cannot be easily dismissed.

Deciding that “be fruitful” is a blessing and not a command might or might not change how we affect family planning.⁷ Rejecting a blessing from God seems too presumptuous and might actually invite curse in its stead, so the course most people choose should not be affected at all, whether command or blessing. We should graciously accept what God chooses to give to us, realizing that he knows our needs and capabilities better than we do. However, no one should be ostracized or harassed because they choose not to have a large family or perhaps choose not to have children at all. I believe economic reasons for not having children to be petty and faithless, but there are many other reasons that I am not capable of judging, such as precarious health of the potential mother, genetic disorders in either parent, or any number of other reasons. Paul wrote that under certain circumstances it is better to remain unmarried, and it might be that under certain circumstances it is better to remain childless or to stop conceiving children. I cannot say for certain what those circumstances are, but I am not willing to judge the hearts of other men and women based solely on how many children they have. God knows and judges the heart in such situations.

A divine command (or even a bit of divine advice) to multiply is a divine command to have sexual intercourse. The misogynist, anti-sex tendencies of a great number of Christians are proved in the very first chapter of Genesis to be perversions. These tendencies were no doubt inherited at least in part from the pagan philosophies that were popular in the early centuries of the Church. The Manicheans of Augustine’s day believed the whole physical universe to be the product of the Evil Kingdom’s invasion of the good. They believed that sex, by causing the continuation of the physical and by being surrender to physical pleasures, is the ultimate evil.⁸ Many prominent Christian teachers of that day, Augustine included, were never able to completely purge this heretical taint from their doctrines, and it has infected the Church to varying degrees ever since.⁹

...and subdue it: and have dominion... If “be fruitful” is a command then so is “subdue it.” To subdue means to forcibly subjugate, but I do not believe that any kind of brutality is intended. In fact, the requirement of a Sabbath for the earth points in the opposite direction. The point of the command was not to grant permission to conquer, but to grant the authority over nature which we require to

⁷ I do not mean abortion, abortifacients, oral contraceptives, or the self-centeredness which our society calls “family planning.”

⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions of St. Augustine, Books I-X*. Trans. F. J. Sheed. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1942.)

⁹ Many Christian and Jewish writings from the period extending several centuries in either direction of the Incarnation feature this heresy. The *Books of Adam and Eve* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* are notable examples.

effectively govern it and to use it to our livelihood. We were not commanded to go out and conquer all of nature for the sake of the conquest itself, but we were blessed with the ability and the authority to reshape it and redirect it as necessary. Possession of the authority to do something when necessary is not a requirement to do it whenever possible. Environmental extremism and pseudo-scientific theories of anthropogenic climate change aside, it is impossible to witness the methods and abuse heaped by some men upon nature and call it righteous. Excessive abuse of authority is justification for rebellion. If we continue to abuse our authority over the land, we will eventually be thrown off by it. There are many examples all over the world of exactly that happening. But we are not to simply ignore all of nature either. Adam was placed in the Garden in order to tend it and protect it; the maintenance of the Garden—and by extension the whole earth—was a central purpose of his creation. Mankind, men in particular, can rarely be truly fulfilled living in the concrete hives we call cities nor in a scarred, oily wasteland of pure industry. We will be most happy living close to the earth, earning at least a part of our living through work with our hands. I have experienced few sensations as gratifying as burying my bare hands in rich soil and shaping and encouraging the growth of new life. The personal anecdotes of many others testify to the same phenomenon in their own lives.

God gave mankind, both male and female, authority over the earth so that we might be able to support ourselves through it and effectively tend it and protect it. Like the ox treading the grain, we may extract comfort and sustenance from the earth, but to take from the land more than we can use simply for the accumulation of wealth is an abuse of our authority. The authority which a husband has over his wife is similar to the authority mankind has over nature in that his authority does not exist for its own sake and must not be abused. Men were given that authority for a purpose: in order to effectively guide and protect their wives. If mankind abuses its authority over the land, the land will reject him; this is justice. If a husband abuses his authority over his wife, she will reject him; this too is justice. Dominion over the land does not mean that the land exists solely for mankind's benefit, nor does headship¹⁰ mean that the woman exists solely for the man's benefit. She exists to be a support to her husband in whatever task God has given him and to be a mother to her children, but not to be a slave to either one. I absolutely do not mean to excuse the wife from submitting herself to her husband in matters where he is not terribly abusive or where he does not demand immoral behavior of her, but a man who mistreats his wife for his own purposes is in rebellion against God's purposes and has rejected the headship of Messiah over him. He has no right to demand submission of his wife when he refuses to submit to his own head.

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground... Thus establishing man's role as a servant of the Earth. It is not an ironclad rule that one

¹⁰ "Headship" is shorthand for the relationship between the Father and the Messiah, between the Messiah and the man, and between the man and the woman. See 1 Corinthians 11:3-16.

thing must necessarily serve that from which it was created, however it is one evidence. Mankind was created from the dust and from God's breath, and we know that he was created to serve God through tending the Garden. Eve was created from the same ingredients channeled through Adam. She was also created to serve God and tend the Garden by tending first to her husband's needs. If it were not for God's command to have dominion over the earth, these examples could lead one to conclude that man is to be subservient to it.

...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life... Thus establishing man's role as a servant of God. Adam was the only creature directly endowed with the spirit of God from the moment of Creation. All other human beings, including Eve (but excepting Yeshua) derive the substance of both body and spirit from Adam.

Genesis 2:15

...put him into the garden of Eden... At the close of the sixth day, on which God created Adam, he called his new creations "very good" (1:31). Then he put Adam into the Garden—a perfect man placed into a perfect Garden. God, seeing the end from the beginning, knew that the maintenance of the Garden was to be Adam's first assignment, so he designed into the perfect man the skills and temperament necessary for a gardener, skills which you and I have inherited, albeit in corrupt form. Our families will be happier and all areas of our lives will be more fulfilling if some kind of husbandry has a place in them.

...to dress it and to keep it... Adam was not placed in the Garden merely to water plants. The King James translators rendered the Hebrew word *awbad* as some variant of "to serve" 240 times.¹¹ The same word can be translated "to till" or "to dress," but usually in the sense of serving the land or the landowner, and never in the sense of furrowing the soil. Adam was given authority over the Garden, but never as its absolute ruler. He was given authority over it so that he might serve it. "To keep it" follows in the same vein. It was translated from the Hebrew *shawmar* which means to guard and protect. The urge to maintain and protect is built into the genetic code of mankind, especially of men, having been given a greater portion of physical strength and martial capacity. We will live more fulfilling lives if we live close to the soil; we will live even more fulfilled lives with family and land of our own to protect and nurture.

There is a chicken and egg question here. The Creation narrative implies that the Garden was created before the man. The question is, was Adam given authority over the Garden because he was to keep it, or was he told to keep it because he had authority over it? The question is relevant to the authority of the father over his family. Does he have authority over his family because he has been given responsibility for their security and maintenance, or does he have responsibility because he has been given authority? Modern feminism would say that the former is true, and if women take responsibility for themselves then men no longer have legitimate authority over them. Unfortunately, their practice results in the exact

¹¹ "H5647." *King James Concordance*. Ed. Rick Meyers. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

opposite of what they preach. The more independence they claim from their husbands, the more dependent they become on other men even to the point of selling their husbands into slavery to support their newfound “freedom.”¹²

Genesis 2:16-17

The command not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was given to Adam before the creation of Eve.

...thou mayest freely eat... It is right that the laborer obtains his sustenance from his labors. Everything that God entrusts to a man, including his own family, can be used to a certain extent to his own benefit. He must be careful, however, not to allow his liberty to become too cumbersome or inequitable to those under his authority. It is also right that those with the highest degree of authority—and therefore responsibility—over any thing may expect the greatest degree of reward from it, although they are certainly not under an obligation to take the full reward. In the military and mercantile worlds, this concept is called RHIP or “Rank Has Its Privileges.”

...thou shalt not eat of it... All created things belong ultimately to God, the creator, and authority over them is delegated from him to mankind in varying degrees. Since all men will be held responsible for how faithful they are in their stewardship over God’s creation, property ownership can never be absolute. No man has the right to do whatever he wishes with anything he owns because everything he owns belongs first to God. He has a responsibility to see that his stewardship is both profitable and just, and he must not rule with too heavy a hand. Wisdom, justice, consistency, and mercy should be every man’s rules.

Genesis 2:18

It is not good that the man should be alone. God did not discover this fact only after creating Adam, but he waited so that Adam could be involved in the process of creating his helper and thus have a greater appreciation for her unique properties and special suitability. There was much that God intended mankind to accomplish, and it could not be done by Adam alone. The man, being made in the image of God, required companionship for physical, mental, and spiritual reasons: physical because

¹² The welfare state and the strongly misandric nature of our family courts reward women for irresponsibility by encouraging them to believe that the wealth and labor of men is theirs by right, and that they owe nothing at all to men in return. The promotion of sexual promiscuity by way of “free love,” abortion, and contraceptives has had similar results, but for a different reason. Free love teaches women that there is no value in being a woman; the man has all the privileges, therefore every woman should strive to be just like a man. Men and women who embrace this philosophy begin to devalue children. They each forget the roles for which God designed them and so forget their purpose in life. Women who have rejected the covering and protection of men become targets for men who have rejected their own roles of authority and responsibility in favor of promiscuity and irresponsibility. Men who support these feminist ideals are either deceived into feeling guilty for supposedly having oppressed women throughout all history or they are consciously relieved that they can now take sexual advantage of whomever among women is willing, without giving a thought to the consequences. The end result is that everyone loses. Women are treated worse than ever, and men are alternately abusive hedonists or treated as slaves.

delegation and division of labor are effective means to address large tasks; mental because, as they say, “Two heads are better than one;” spiritual because there are emotional burdens to be borne alongside the physical, and companionship, especially such as can be provided to a man by a woman makes all burdens seem lighter.

Some have said that this verse proves that celibacy is not of God, but they are contradicted by the clear statements of Yeshua and Paul. The various abilities of all men and women fall somewhere within a wide range. Men tend to have a greater share of some abilities and women tend to have a greater share of others. The two compliment each other, so that a man functions better if he has a woman at his side, and vice versa. There is a small subgroup of individuals, however, who are designed by God to function well on their own apart from the opposite sex. They are endowed with a greater range of talents—not that they possess a greater amount of some particular talent necessarily, but they possess a greater number of distinct talents than most people of either sex. The great weight of Scripture suggests—but does not categorically state—that such individuals are overwhelmingly male. Yeshua suggested that such men are specially gifted with celibacy for specific tasks in the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. There is some suggestion that Paul was a widower during his ministry, but there is no doubt that he was celibate, and that he believed this state to be of great benefit in his calling.

I will make him an help meet for him. According to Adam Clarke, the Hebrew for “help meet for him,” *ezer kenegdo*, “implies that the woman was to be a perfect resemblance of the man, possessing neither inferiority nor superiority, but being in all things like and equal to himself.”¹³ He was right to a certain extent. Eve was like Adam in that she was of mankind, and not animal kind, and in that she possessed both body and spirit while the animals have only body, but was not quite “a perfect resemblance of the man.” The physical differences between men and women are obvious. The spiritual differences are not so obvious, but they are evident in the Creation story, in many other scriptural references to the differently ordained roles of men and women, and in the practical roles into which men and women have almost universally organized themselves.¹⁴

Ezer implies more of an ally than a servant. In fact, David used that word several times to refer to God. In Psalm 33, he wrote, “Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.” And in Psalm 70, he wrote, “O God: thou art my help and my deliverer.” The term implies an indispensable supporter, a rescuer, and a man’s wife is certainly all of these things. There is nothing in the word to imply inferiority, but there is really nothing in the word that implies any kind of hierarchy at all except one of crucial support. The fact that the woman was made specifically for the man’s

¹³ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

¹⁴Stephen Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*. (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1974.) 228. “...the central fact is that men and women are different from each other from the gene to the thought to the act and that emotions that underpin masculinity and femininity, that make reality as experienced by the male eternally different from that experienced by the female, flow from the biological natures of man and woman...the women of every society have taken the paths they have not because they were forced by men but because they have followed their own imperatives.”

purposes, and not for her own, however, demonstrates God's intended purpose for her, which is to actively serve the man, just as man's purpose is to actively serve God. Stephen B. Clark wrote, "The description of the woman as a 'helper fit for him' implies that the woman was not simply to be, but to do. Her role is to be an active one in the support of her husband."¹⁵ Eve was not created just to keep Adam company, and both men and women will live happier lives if they focus on their God ordained tasks.

There is also no reason to suppose that women have no other purpose but to serve their husbands and bear their children. God has often used women as prophetesses to convey his words to mankind, and he has also given women the ability to take over leadership roles when men fail either through inability or abdication. Women might have their own missions assigned directly by God, but the vast majority of women will be happier and more fulfilled as wives and mothers, just as the majority of men will be happier as husbands and fathers. Part of being a godly wife and mother involves willingly submitting to her husband in her role as his subordinate ally.¹⁶

Genesis 2:19-20

...to see what he would call them. A name is more than just an assemblage of sounds. The names that we write on birth certificates and contracts do nothing more than identify us as separate individuals; they distinguish Joe from Frank, but little else. They tell nothing of who or what we really are. When "name" is used in the Scriptures, it often refers more to one's reputation, office, and characteristics than to the vocalization that separates one anonymous face from another. But in both of these senses, there is a requirement of authority in the one who gives the name. When the Egyptian king defeated Judah he renamed King Eliakim to Jehoiakim (2 Chronicles 36:4). When the Babylonians captured Judah and took some of their young men to serve him, their governor gave them new names (Daniel 1:7). When Moses asked God for his name, God said simply "I Am Who I Am" (Exodus 3:14). Essentially, God said "Who is there above or before me to give me a name?" The ability to give a name to someone extends from having authority over the one named.

There were several purposes to this naming exercise:

1. To demonstrate Adam's authority over the animals.
2. Superficially, to identify any animals that could serve as special assistants to Adam in his managing of the Garden.
3. Ultimately, to demonstrate to Adam that no animal could ever be sufficient to his needs.

¹⁵ Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*. 20.

¹⁶ "Genesis 2:18 defines the man's problem as his aloneness, but it defines the solution as 'a helper fit for him'....Genesis does not describe woman as a companion to man but as a helper. Von Rad points out, the phrase is not a romantic evaluation of woman. Rather it presents woman as 'useful' to man....A man's wife is supposed to 'do something' for him, just as he is supposed to 'do something' for her. If she does not do what she is supposed to do for him (and if he does not do what he is supposed to do for her) deep interpersonal sharing will not make the marriage a good marriage." Ibid. 22.

But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. After having seen and named all the animals of land and air, Adam knew that none of these would be able to provide him with true companionship or be the “help meet” that God intended. Adam required a more exact counterpart to himself, someone who could commune with him on a more equal basis.

Genesis 2:21

...and he took one of his ribs... Tom Shipley wrote,

Everything about Adam’s creation stressed God’s *authority* over him, including the *derivation* of his soul from Him. Now Genesis 2:21-23 informs us that Eve’s creation was not *ex nihilo*, but from the man, as a result of Divine action, even as the man was from God. Obviously God is primary in all of this. Yet it is also clear that this *mode* of creation, being an analog of Adam’s own creation from God, *stresses Eve’s subordination to Adam, her own immediate source of existence, as Adam’s mode of creation stresses his subordination to God.*¹⁷

In Scripture God variously appeals to his authorship of Creation and to his prior existence to it as bases of his own authority over it. Since man existed first, and woman was created out of man and for man, then his authority over her was established in the Garden before the Fall through both precedence and descent. The same cannot be said for the animals having authority over man because man was not derived from the animals, but directly from the earth and from God, both of whom preceded the animals. Adam’s temporal place in Creation (1:26) implies a service relationship to the animals, his physical derivation from the earth (2:7) implies a fraternal relationship to them, and his spiritual derivation from God (2:7) implies a superior relationship to them. Eve’s temporal place in Creation and her physical and spiritual derivation from Adam (2:22) imply a service relationship to him, as explicitly stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:9. The fact that Eve was not created through any act of Adam demonstrates that he does not have absolute authority over her, and, in fact, he has no inherent authority over her at all except what God has granted him. She was created by God out of the substance of another of God’s creations, placing her absolutely under God’s authority. The fact that she was created out of the substance of Adam, solely for the purposes of Adam, and was then given to Adam by God places her firmly—though still not absolutely—under Adam’s authority. For a man to treat a woman with contempt is to show contempt for God. It should also be noted that Eve was not half of Adam, nor was she created from his head or his foot, but from his side: below his head, but not so far below that she could be put under his foot.¹⁸

¹⁷ Shipley. “Article 3: Patriarchy Before the Fall, Part 2,” *Man and Woman*. 10-11.

¹⁸ Rabbis and others have variously taught that Adam had two heads or had a tail and that one of these appendages had been removed to create Eve. That does not seem to be the sense of this verse, and I see no

I should make it clear that I do not believe that Adam was a hermaphrodite. Adam was not split into two new creatures, but a small part of Adam was removed as source material from which Eve was then created. I admit that the difference between these two views is slight, but it is important in understanding the respective roles which men and women were created to fill. Paul wrote that the woman was created of the man and for the man. The Hebrew word used in Genesis, *awdam*, can be used of mankind in general as well as of the first man, but not so the Greek word used in 1 Corinthians, *aner*, which is almost exclusively used of the male gender.

Genesis 2:22

...and brought her unto the man. God presented Eve to Adam as if she were a gift to a favored child or laborer for that is exactly what she was, once more demonstrating Adam's authority over Eve. Shipley pointed out the resemblance between God's actions and those of a father giving away his daughter, and how this tradition is a ceremonial acknowledgment that when a woman marries, her father surrenders his authority over her to her new husband. It is worth pointing out that traditional Jewish marriages include a *ketubah*, which is partly a promise from the groom to the bride and her father (and sometimes her eldest brother or others of her family) that her husband will treat her according to certain minimum standards.

Genesis 2:23

...bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh... Adam restated the source of Eve's substance, acknowledging his relationship to her and responsibility for her.

She shall be called Woman... This is the culmination of the naming exercise that began in v18; the whole sequence from v18 through v24 is really one event: Adam's need for the woman and God's creation of her. Adam's naming of the animals in v20 demonstrated his authority over them, as his naming of Eve demonstrated his authority over her. The fruitlessness of Adam's search in v20 showed him the inadequacy of any of the animals as a help meet for him, while his description of Eve in v23 demonstrated her perfect suitability. When he saw her, he recognized that she was what he had needed all along. He understood the point of his previous exertions, and thereby gained a greater appreciation for how much Eve was like himself and how much higher she was than all the rest of God's creatures.

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother... When a young man marries, he establishes himself and his household as an entity apart from his father's and mother's. He does not completely leave their house or authority and must always respect them as the source of his life, but he becomes an independent agent able to deal with the world in his own right. He takes the mantle of his own house

reason for giving such speculations any credence. "Tract Erubin," *Babylonian Talmud, Book 2*. Trans. Michael L. Rodkinson. (Internet Sacred Text Archive, 1918, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>. Accessed 23 November 2005.) 41.

onto his shoulders and becomes answerable directly to God and no one else for how he manages his charge.¹⁹ This is not a mandate for matrilocal society, only for the clear division of authority and responsibility.

...shall cleave unto his wife... “Cleave” does not mean to split apart. The Hebrew is *dabak*, which means to cling or stay close, and has no alternate meaning of splitting as does the English word. “Cleave” describes a union, not a division.

The Creation narrative gives almost no information on the specific dynamics God intended for the relationship between husband and wife, only some generalities. Perhaps this is because, as the human race expanded, there could be no single set of rules for every marriage. Every individual human being possesses a different set of physical, spiritual, and psychological characteristics.

...they shall be one flesh. The idea of two becoming one does not only refer to a metaphysical unity of spirit, but also to an actual physical union. In other words, a man and woman become one flesh through the physical act of sexual intercourse and no marriage is complete until this is accomplished. They become one through the exchange of bodily fluids, in which each party (although primarily the woman) absorbs something from the other into their own blood, and they become one through the unification of the male and female gametes in a child. This “one flesh” unity, however, is still not completely literal. A husband and wife obviously do not become permanently joined at the pelvis. Neither is this unity inherently exclusive. Paul wrote of how a man, regardless of marital status, can become one with a harlot who has already been one with many other men. Moses, the recorder of the Creation account, wrote nothing against polygyny, which he surely would have done if he had understood “one flesh” to be an exclusive relationship. Those who insist that the creation of a single woman instead of several women is a monogamous mandate fail to apply their reasoning consistently. Samuel Chapman wrote, “They insist that this text means we should each have only one wife because Adam did, but they do not insist that she be made from our ribs, that she should be directly and miraculously given by God, or that she should be naked.”²⁰ In a review of Hitchens’ and Gambrell’s *Multiple Marriage: A Study of Polygamy in Light of the Bible* Chapman adds

Presumably Dr. Hitchens walks round his house naked, for Adam was created naked. Actually, I presume he sleeps in the open and doesn’t have a house, because God only made Adam a garden and no house. I presume Dr Hitchens calls the animals names, doesn’t drive a car and only eats fruit and vegetables, just like Adam.

¹⁹ There are some checks placed on intrafamilial relationships by society and Torah. For example, a child is somewhat answerable to his parents as long as they live, but there is a very real boundary around a man’s family, which a parent must not lightly cross. For another example, the Jewish *ketubah* has at times included provisions for a wife’s protection, including the right of her father or brother to intervene in matters between her and her husband.

²⁰ Samuel Chapman, “Scripture Index.” (PolygamyPage.info, <http://polygamy.page.wordpress.com/2008/12/16/polygamy-scripture-index/>. Accessed 25 February 2009.)

Maybe Dr Hitchens doesn't read his Bible (which would explain a lot) because Adam didn't have one. Or maybe....just maybe, in the rest of his life he realises that when God wanted us to follow what was in the beginning, he told us to follow it. That means, as he conspicuously failed to tell us to be monogamous, we don't have to be monogamous.²¹

God creates eunuchs, but there were none created at the beginning.

The *Talmud* says that God only formed one woman by his own hands because her betrothal to Adam was an exception to the normal course of things. After Eve was created, God's method of creating the rest of humanity was in place, and all other men are to find their wives from among the daughters of men.²² There was only one woman not because one is all that is allowed, but because one is all that is required. What would be the conclusion if God *had* created two or three women for Adam? That all men must therefore have two or three wives? A polygyny mandate would be just as erroneous as a monogamy mandate.

Adonai elochenu, Adonai echad. "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Husband and wife must present a united front to the world, acting as a single unit. They must be *echad* as Father, Son, and Spirit are *echad*, and as Yeshua and the Church are *echad*: one in purpose, one in spirit, and one in mind. A husband does not live for his own purposes, but for God's. He is the ruler of his house, and must live for his wife as Yeshua lived for the Church, willing to give up his very life for her benefit. Likewise, a wife does not live for her own purposes. The woman was created for the specific purpose of supporting her husband. She must exist for his purposes and for the purposes of his house, just as the Church exists for Yeshua's and his Kingdom's purposes. Neither husband nor wife has any interest completely independently of the other.²³ To live in any other way is to invite further separation.

Genesis 2:25

[They] were not ashamed. There is no shame in simply being unclothed. It is our fallen nature which brings shame with nakedness and necessitates a physical covering in almost all situations.

²¹ Samuel Chapman, "Multiple Marriage: A Study of Polygamy in Light of the Bible An extended review and rebuttal". (The Polygamy Page, <http://www.polygamy.com/Reviews/Multiple-Marriage.htm>. Accessed 17 November 2005.)

²² "Tract Aboth," *Babylonian Talmud, Book Five*. Trans. Michael L. Rodkinson. (Internet Sacred Text Archive, 1918, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t05/abo05.htm>. Accessed 05 February 2009.) 22-23

²³ Derek Prince made the argument that both husband and wife cease to exist for themselves and begin to exist for each other. (*The Marriage Covenant*. (New Kensington, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1978.) 44) As much as I appreciate his insights on marriage and many other things, that approach is incorrect if taken too literally. No person, married or unmarried, should ever be living for themselves. The point of all our existences is to serve God, and he must be the focus of our lives. This means that a man's life and responsibilities change somewhat to include the needs of his wife and children, but his focus must remain essentially the same: to serve God. On the other hand, when a woman marries, the focus of her service to God changes more profoundly in that she begins to serve God through serving her husband.

Genesis 3:3-6

...neither shall ye touch it... The prohibition against touching the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil might have been an invention of Eve, but it is just as likely that Adam, over-stressing the importance of not eating from the tree, told her not to even touch it. Satan was then able to use the fallacy of Adam's unauthorized supplement to plant a seed of doubt against the rest of what Adam had told her. "God told you not to touch it. I have already shown you that he was wrong about that, so why should you believe what he told you about eating it?" It is important not to confuse the commands of men with the commands of God. Men taught that it was wrong to heal or to pick a head of grain when in need on the Sabbath. Yeshua corrected their understanding through the actual commandments of God. There are other examples that might be more immediate to some readers: prohibiting all alcohol because drunkenness is wrong, prohibiting all medicine because an over-reliance on men is wrong; condemning all sexual pleasure because licentiousness is wrong; prohibiting polygyny because adultery is wrong. There might be times when it is appropriate to put "fences around fences" as the rabbis say, but make sure that the student knows the true nature of each fence: which one is the precautionary, circumstantial boundary and which is the real, theogenic boundary.²⁴

Some people doubt the intelligence of everyone but themselves and routinely practice this kind of double-fencing against others—politicians come immediately to mind—but there are two classes of people who are routinely *objects* of double-fencing: women and children. Children are often too inexperienced to understand the nuances of every prohibition and so it is appropriate, in order to protect them from themselves, to erect precautionary boundaries, which should be removed as they grow in their understanding. Adult women, however, should not often be so restricted. Eve might not have been so easily deceived if she had been made aware of God's actual words. Women might be more easily deceived than men (in general), but they are perfectly capable of thinking for themselves and making moral judgments when given all the facts.

...her husband with her... On the other hand, it is sometimes quite appropriate to place precautionary boundaries to protect women from malevolent, outside influences. Some people believe that Adam was not only present in the Garden, but right beside her observing her exchange with the serpent. I do not believe that to be correct, though it is a perfectly reasonable conclusion. Adam could have been "with her" in the Garden, yet miles away. We are not told how large the Garden was, only that it lay in the midst of four rivers. If Adam was near enough to hear the exchange,

²⁴ The rabbis admit as much in "Tract Aboth" of the *Talmud, Book Five*. (Rodkinson. 8-9): 'R. Simeon b. Elazar said: Adam can be likened to an Israelite who married a proselyte woman, and he constantly sought to impress upon her mind the following regulations: "My daughter, eat not bread when thy hands are unclean, eat not of fruits which were not tithed, do not violate the Sabbath, do not get into the habit of making vows, and walk not with another man. If thou shouldst violate any of the commands, thou wilt die." Another one, who wished to mislead her, did those very things before her that she had been told were sinful: he ate bread when his hands were unclean, partook of fruits which were not tithed, violated the Sabbath, etc., and thereby caused this proselyte to think that everything that her husband told her was entirely false, so she violated all his commandments.'

then he failed to provide Eve with the protection she deserved as one under his authority. If the prohibition against touching the tree was Eve's invention then he should have corrected her when he heard it; if it was his own invention then he should have clarified it.

Authority always comes with responsibility and accountability. Adam was responsible for the security and provision of everything under his authority, including Eve, and accountable to God for that responsibility.

I have also heard speculation that Adam might have eaten *because* he was responsible for Eve. Once she had eaten, he might have realized that she would be expelled from the Garden. He might have eaten in order to join her in exile rather than fail so completely in his responsibility for her safety. It is a compelling thought, but without solid scriptural support. In either case, Adam's choice to die enabled Eve's redemption. Although Eve was the first to sin, Adam caused the whole world to fall into sin and thereby made a Savior necessary. A more compelling spin on that theory is that Adam sinned because he knew that his fall would create the need for a Savior and hence the possibility of Eve's future redemption. I do not know what Eve's status would have been without a future Messiah. Perhaps her husband's covering would have been sufficient for her restoration to God.

Genesis 3:7

And the eyes of them both were opened... They did not suddenly realize that they were naked; they were neither stupid nor ignorant before eating the fruit. Their eyes were opened to new dimensions of nakedness: the power of the physical to corrupt the spiritual and their newly acquired state of spiritual undress.

As I stated earlier, there is no inherent shame in nakedness. It is only what we do with that nakedness that brings actual guilt. Albert Barnes wrote that the onset of shame from their eating of the fruit brought on a general sense of shame and a desire to hide as much of themselves from each other and the world as possible.²⁵ I believe that to be true, but their own shame was probably augmented by the instigator of their crime, who is not only the tempter, but also the accuser. A part of his function in the universe is to accuse both the guilty and the innocent. While Adam and Eve assumed no guilt in their nakedness or in their physical desire for each other, they realized the power of sensuality to corrupt the spirit to lasciviousness, and the sudden imbalance of the internal power struggle between the physical and the spiritual made them easy targets for the accuser. A little push and he is able to deny us pleasurable things because we instinctively realize that pleasure is seductive. The pursuit of pleasure can easily become a prime motivator. Although pleasure—or even the pursuit of pleasure—is not in itself sinful, if it is allowed to dictate our actions it will become our master. I believe Adam and Eve sensed this power of sensuality and recoiled from it, feeling guilt that was not even theirs.

²⁵ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

Genesis 3:9

And the LORD God called unto Adam... God knew exactly where Adam and Eve were hiding and all that had transpired. He was not really asking for Adam's location; he was calling Adam to account for his sins. What is most important for our purposes is that God did not call Eve, but only Adam. This is because the man was the responsible authority. Eve was certainly responsible for her actions, as her punishment testifies, but ultimate accountability lay with Adam. It was Adam's sin, and not Eve's which brought death into the world.

Genesis 3:11-13

Adam might have been the primary authority on earth, but everyone will be held accountable for their own actions. God began judging guilt from the top of the chain of command, but meted out punishment beginning from the bottom.

And the man said... Most commentators believe that Adam tried to blame God's gift of Eve for his fall, as if what he was really saying was, "Well, if you hadn't given me that woman in the first place..." That does not seem likely to me considering the circumstances. Imagine Adam hiding in the bushes with only his fig-leaf covering, terrified that God's wrath might strike him down at any moment. Then God, the source and focus of all power in the universe appears in the Garden and says, "Adam, what have you done?" Can you imagine Adam responding through all his shame and terror, "It's your fault, God!" I do not believe that. Instead, I imagine Adam's response to have been more humble: "The woman, your beautiful gift to me, gave me the fruit. I was weak, and I failed to protect her. So I took it from her, and I ate it too." Adam accepted responsibility for his own actions. He did not say that Eve tricked him or that God set him up. He simply said, "She gave it to me, and I ate it." The exact truth could lie in either direction.

And the woman said... Eve's response to God's query can also be understood as an attempt to pass the blame for her actions, but I believe she was as forthright as Adam. She told the truth, that the serpent had deceived her, but, in the end, she simply said, "I did eat."

Genesis 3:14-19

The original purposes of man and woman were given in previous verses, but they can be secondarily discerned in the punishments given here. God gave Adam the task of overseeing and tending to Creation, and he punished him by making his work more difficult, forcing him to occupy more of his time in making the earth productive and less in getting himself into trouble. God gave Eve the task of supporting her husband as his functional subordinate and as the mother of his children, and he punished her by making both of these tasks more difficult. Submission to her husband and childbearing both became a struggle for Eve just as the provision and protection of his family became a struggle for Adam. It is important to realize that these punishments were not given vindictively or sadistically. They were the natural consequences of their actions and also provided a

means through which we might be drawn closer to our Creator. Sowing crops and children cannot save us completely, of course, but they can serve to focus our attention on what is important, that is, on our service to God and Creation.

(See also 1 Timothy 2:15.)

v14 - God said to the serpent... God gave Adam and Eve a chance to explain themselves and admit their guilt, opening the door to forgiveness and redemption. He gave the serpent no such courtesy. Already judged and condemned, the serpent was simply sentenced. Not being of Adam's seed, as Eve was, he could not share in mankind's redemption. He was, is, and will be punished solely for his own sins, apparently with no chance for repentance or mercy.

v15 - ...her seed... In the natural a woman does not have seed in the same way that a man does. This was either an indication that the Messiah would be born of a virgin with no seed contributed by a man or it is an artifact of the language which might have had no specific word or concept for a woman's ova.

v16 - ...thy sorrow and thy conception... Conception, childbearing, and child-rearing bring pain to women: physical, emotional, and spiritual. But there is also joy and purpose. Eve was created to be Adam's companion and support. One way in which she was to support him was in the bearing of children. In the Garden this might have been a secondary task to supporting Adam in his work, but with the Fall her labor in child-rearing became her new focus so that she would have little time or strength for anything else. Her children, who should have only been a source of joy, additionally became a source of pain and struggle.

v16 (cont.) - Thy desire shall be to thy husband... There is a Jewish tradition that this desire refers to a woman longing for her husband who must often be away from the home in order to make his living.²⁶ I believe that God meant a different kind of desire. Perhaps because Adam's leadership had failed her in the Garden or perhaps because of the new power imbalance between the flesh and the spirit within the woman, she would resent her husband's headship and seek control for herself even while desiring her husband's rule over her.²⁷ But the nature of creation and of God's irresistible plan meant that her husband must still rule over her. Competent sociologists and anthropologists tell us that there has never been a truly matriarchal society.²⁸ When a society becomes dominated by women, collapse will quickly follow. In fact, even before a society can become matriarchal, it must already be degraded by immorality and godlessness. Isaiah 3:12 characterizes Israel in her darkest moment as being ruled by women and fools (or children, depending on the

²⁶ "Tract Aboth," *Talmud, Book Five*. Rodkinson. 6.

²⁷ Goldberg, *Patriarchy*. On page 104 he wrote, "...there may even be a female desire for men to dominate...that is a secondary manifestation of the neural factors directly relevant to female sexuality. Biological evidence indicates that there is a strong possibility that such dominance and submission factors exist in male and female physiologies..."

²⁸ Robert Sheaffer, "'The Goddess Remembered' - A Case of 'False Memory Syndrome.'" (Combating Feminist Ms-Information, December 1993, http://www.debunker.com/texts/goddess_rem.html. Accessed 05 February 2009.) In part, he wrote, "The idea of a vanished 'matriarchal' or 'woman-centered' stage of history became part of Marxist theory, and was widely taught. However, modern anthropology absolutely rejects the idea that civilization or history progresses in 'stages' because the immense data now available from societies all around the world fails to support it."

translation). Matriarchy was not the cause of Israel's demise, only a symptom. When a people obey God and listen to his words they will be ruled by just and righteous men. When they are wicked and given to pride and licentiousness, they will be ruled by women and fools.

God was not commanding the woman to submit to her husband's rule, although it was certainly proper for her to do so. It was not necessary for him to tell her what she already knew. He was simply informing Eve of what would be, whether she or anyone else approved or not. The parallel with God's warning to Cain in Genesis 4:7 is inescapable:

Table 1: Comparison between Gen 3:16 and 4:7.

Genesis 3:16	your desire → your husband	He shall rule over you
Genesis 4:7	its desire → you	You shall rule over it

This was a warning to Eve that her nature would at times lead her to try to control her husband, but she should resist that tendency, and that her husband must not allow it to happen. It takes active effort on the part of both husband and wife to fight off the natural entropy that pulls them into a cycle of disrespect and dominance. A successful marriage does not just happen, but is the result of struggle and determination. Men must struggle to love their wives and to rule with gentleness and meekness. Women must struggle to overcome their natural inclination to follow their own will in opposition to their husbands.

On the other hand, the only other time that this word for desire, *teshuqah*, is used is in Song of Songs 7:10 in reference to a healthy relationship in which the husband desires his wife. The great difference is that the two instances in Genesis involve desire and conquest, while the instance in the Song involves desire and submission.

An alternative interpretation, such as that offered by Joseph Coleson, is that Eve's desire would be for a husband, but she would receive a master instead.²⁹ While this might be an accurate description of what happens in some marriages and it might have much anecdotal support, I do not believe it to be God's intended meaning.

v17 - ...the voice of thy wife... Because Adam allowed his wife, whom he was supposed to be ruling, to influence him to sin,³⁰ because he allowed one element under his authority to control his actions, now the rest of his domain would also rebel against him. The ground and the plants and the animals would all fight for control of their own destinies, just as the woman would fight for control of hers. The earth would not yield its fruit willingly, and much of what it did yield would be taken by disease or eaten by animals.

...all the days of thy life. Like the woman, the man would experience both great joy and pain in fulfilling his calling. In the Garden procuring food had been easy; his

²⁹Joseph E. Coleson, *Ezer Ceneqdo: A Power Like Him, Facing Him as Equal*. (Grantham, Pennsylvania: Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, 1996.)

³⁰I am absolutely not saying that a man should never ask his wife's opinion or that he should not take it when given. I am saying that he should never put his wife's opinion above God's.

primary purpose had been only to maintain. After the Fall, extracting sustenance from the earth became the focus of all his efforts. The psychological, physical, and spiritual rewards are great, but so are the pains. The Talmud points out that the woman's curse of sorrow is limited to childbearing, while the man's is extended to "all the days of thy life."³¹ The generally higher mortality rates of men in almost all societies bears this out, although it is probably not as true in the more technological and industrial societies.

Genesis 3:20

Adam called his wife's name Eve... Adam again gave a name to Eve, thus re-affirming two foundational principles of the role and purpose of womankind. The fact that he gave her a new name, post-Fall, re-affirmed his authority over her, and the name he chose re-affirmed her role as the mother of all mankind. Her name in the Garden had simply been "Woman" signifying her primary role as man's support. Her new name was "*Khavvah*," which means "life giver," signifying a change in her focus from help-meet to mother. The role of help-meet had not been abandoned, but would be primarily fulfilled through bringing up her children.

Genesis 3:21

...God made coats of skin... He made coats not only to cover their nakedness, but to foreshadow the blood that must eventually be shed to cover their sins. I have heard it taught that the animal killed for its skin was a lamb. I do not know if this is true, but it seems appropriate.

Genesis 4:7

...thou shalt rule over him. The King James use of "him" instead of "it" can be a little misleading, although it was probably intended to maintain the anthropomorphic depiction of sin as a physical assailant "crouching at the door." The Modern King James Version reads, "If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin crouches at the door; and its desire is for you, and you shall rule over it." Some commentators and translators believe that *khatawath* (translated as "sin" in the KJV) should be translated "sin-offering," and that the "him" of the second half of the verse refers to Abel. I do not believe that to be correct. *Strong's Hebrew Definitions* defines *khatawath* this way:

An offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness), and its penalty, occasion, sacrifice, or expiation; also (concretely) an offender: - punishment (of sin), purifying (-fication for sin), sin (-ner, offering).

³¹ "Chapter X." *Talmud, Book Three*. Rodkinson, 250.

I believe the first definition, with its connotation of habitual sin, applies, and that God was warning Cain not to let it gain control. Echoing his earlier words to Eve, God warned Cain that his fleshly nature, once given a foothold, would always struggle to master him. But God also promised Cain that he could be the master of it if he so chose. This is not a curse against Cain so much as it is an observation on fallen human nature.

Genesis 4:17

And Cain knew his wife. If Adam and Eve were the first and only two humans to have been directly created by God at this time, who was Cain's wife? The credible commentators unanimously point to Cain's sister. The Biblical account really leaves no other option. God obviously planned from the very beginning to populate the earth through consanguinogamy, although the idea seems repulsive to us, and understandably so. Leviticus 18:29 says that such things are an abomination and that people who do them should be "cut off from among their people." Prohibitions against sibling incest are so deeply entrenched in our culture that the mere suggestion is repulsive. Our objections are real, and they are valid, but they were not always so.

I do not believe that the Supreme Law of God—being the reality behind the reflection that we call the Mosaic Law—ever changes, but the way in which the Law is expressed in practice might change with specific circumstances. Yeshua said that all of the Mosaic Law is based on the love of God and neighbor. It is easy to see how the law against sibling marriage demonstrates a love for neighbor because of the increased risk of birth defects in the offspring from such marriages. The question to answer is how sibling marriage might not have been contrary to neighborly love at the time of Creation. Before the Fall there was no sickness and therefore there were no inheritable genetic disorders. Until the discoveries of modern genetics concerning the nature of mutation and inheritance, this question was impossible to answer; we could only trust God that he had his reasons (which trust is not at all a bad thing). After the Fall there was death, but the extremely long life-spans testify to the rarity of disease and some mechanism which postponed or prevented aging altogether.³² After the Flood, however, the genes of all living things endured an extended period of deterioration. Our life-spans decreased, our diseases increased, and we developed diabetes, anemia, and other inheritable genetic disorders.³³ Until that time, there was no reason to prohibit sibling marriage because there was nothing about it that demonstrated non-love for God or neighbor.

³² Carl Weiland, "Living for 900 Years?" *Creation Ex Nihilo* 20(4):10–13. (Answers in Genesis, Sept–Nov 1998, <http://answersingenesis.org/docs/4082.asp>. Accessed 7 February 2004.)

³³ Carl Weiland, "Decreased Lifespans: Have We Been Looking in the Right Place?" *TJ* 8 (2, 1994):138–141. (Answers in Genesis, http://answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/tj/docs/v8n2_decreased_life.asp. 7 February 2004.)

Genesis 4:19-24

Lamech took unto him two wives. The Law of First Mention is a method of hermeneutics in which the student interprets all scriptural references to a given concept primarily in light of its very first mention. This is a very subjective method of Biblical interpretation, and a dangerous one because it very quickly breaks down into nonsense. While it is often asserted that polygyny must be wrong because the first polygynist was a murderer, we could as easily assert that polygyny must be right because it led to the invention of all wind and string instruments. (See Genesis 4:21.) In fact, the sequence of the narrative would render that case even stronger than the former: Moses told of Lamech's polygyny, then of his descendants' inventions, and only then does he tell of Lamech killing another man. The absurdity of this train of logic is evident, but many people have no difficulty using the same method to declare all forms of polygamy to be perversions on the basis of Lamech. First Mention can be useful because, in order to understand what came after, one must know that which came before, but exegesis by inference alone is always dangerous. Whenever an inference leads to a conclusion in direct opposition to more clear passages of Scripture, we can know that the inference is false.³⁴

Matthew Henry wrote, "One of Cain's wicked race is the first recorded as having broken the law of marriage. Hitherto, one man had but one wife at a time; but Lamech took two...He seems to abuse the patience of God in sparing Cain, into an encouragement to expect that he may sin unpunished."³⁵ He made four common assertions not supported by Scripture:

1. There was a law against polygyny.
2. Lamech was the first polygynist.
3. Lamech was a murderer.
4. The descendants of Seth were somehow more righteous than the descendants of Cain.

Neither Genesis nor any other book of the canon says these things. It says that Lamech was a polygynist and that he killed a man. Henry's assertions concerning Lamech might or might not be accurate—there is not enough information recorded to say—but his assertion concerning polygyny is an addition to the Law of God, an addition which God commanded us not to make. Even if it could be determined beyond any doubt that Lamech was an evil man, that determination would have no bearing at all on the rightness or wrongness of polygyny. Is kindness evil if performed by an evil man?³⁶ Moses, the man who recorded Lamech's actions, was the same who recorded the many laws against marital deviance that were dictated by God and found in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, yet he wrote nothing at all against polygyny. In fact, Moses appears to have been a polygynist, himself.

³⁴ Some other erroneous conclusions that could be drawn using the Law of First Mention:

- a. Celibacy is immoral because the very first humans were commanded to procreate.
- b. Metallurgists, musicians, and tent-makers are evil because the first of such were Cainites.
- c. Farmers are irresponsible and violent because the first farmer was a murderer.

³⁵ Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

³⁶ The unrighteous judge of Yeshua's sermon at Luke 18:1-8 comes to mind. If an unrighteous judge grants justice, is God unrighteous for doing the same?

Henry's claim against the descendants of Cain is probably based on one possible interpretation of Genesis 6:2 and on the dualistic heresies of the Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and others. The *Books of Adam and Eve* are of the same tradition. Genesis 6:12 plainly contradicts them, however, when it says that "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." The line of Seth was just as corrupt as the line of Cain. There was nothing especially pure about the Sethites, and there was nothing especially corrupt about the Cainites.

I believe the key to understanding this passage is in its context and in the meaning of the names of Lamech's two wives. The reasons for the destruction of antediluvian man are two-fold: violence and sexual immorality. In the Nephilim chapter six we see an extreme example of the latter. In Lamech we see an example of the former. Lamech married for wealth and power, and when he had those things, he abused them, thinking that he was beyond other men's reach. Lamech's wives were Adah and Zillah. Adah, according to *Strong's*, means "ornament." She could have been a trophy wife with physical beauty, but I suspect that her name represents pride, possibly a pride of wealth.

Zillah comes from the root *tsel* which, also according to *Strong's*, means "shadow" or "shade," and which was sometimes used as an allusion to hospitality, authority, and protection. In Genesis 19:8, Lot refers to the visiting angels under his protection as being "under the shadow of [his] roof." In Judges 9:15, the shadow of a bramble is used to represent the authority and protection of a king: 'And the bramble said unto the trees, "If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow."' Throughout the Bible, authority is referred to as a covering. God covers us with his wings. We are covered by Yeshua's blood. We are covered by the Messiah. Wives are covered by their husbands, and so on. Zillah represents the authority of some worldly power, whether that of Lamech or of some other person under whose shadow Lamech lived.

Whether Lamech married into these things or whether his wives only represent them allegorically, we cannot know for certain, but I assert³⁷ that the lesson of Lamech is that he believed himself to be impunable. He killed a man for light cause, and then spoke as if there was no God in Heaven: "If Cain killed his brother and went unpunished though he had neither wealth nor power, how much more will I go unpunished when I have both wealth and power?" The point of mentioning Lamech's polygyny was not the polygyny per se, but pride and the abuse of power, which is the same point of the law against multiplying wives in Deuteronomy 17.

Genesis 5:3

...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image... In the most precise sense, only Adam was created in God's image. All of Adam's and Eve's descendants were born in the image of Adam and Eve, and not exactly in the image of God. Men

³⁷ I realize the irony of warning against exegesis by inference and then proceeding to do exactly what I warned against. The inferences that I have drawn from this passage are tenuous, however, they remain true in principle even if they are not the actual point of Lamech's story. They are supported rather than contradicted by the whole witness of Scripture.

inherit Adam's quality of being the image of God, although in a corrupt, fallen form, and women inherit Eve's quality of being the image of Adam, bearing the image of God.

(See also 1 Corinthians 11:3-16.)

Genesis 6:1-7

...when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men... I have heard many speculations about the meanings of the phrases "sons of God" and "daughters of men," but they all come down to three possibilities:

1. Sons of rulers, i.e. princes
2. Descendants of Seth
3. Fallen angels, i.e. demons

Sons of rulers. The word translated in the KJV as "God" is *elohim*, which is a plural word used to refer either to the singular God or to plural rulers or judges. This interpretation does not have a wide following, but it is reasonable if one considers the Hebrew word translated as "giants" in v4. The word is *nephilim*, which is translated by *Strong's* as "fellers" or "tyrants."³⁸ If the sons of rulers were abusing their position and taking whatever women they chose, their children might very well be even worse than they. I doubt this interpretation, however because I do not see how there was anything significantly different between these *nephilim* and the tyrannical rulers of many other peoples throughout history.

Descendants of Seth. The phrase "the sons of God" appears often in the New Testament to describe believers. This has been one of the most common interpretations throughout Church history, but it depends on the idea that the line of Seth was orders of magnitude more godly than the line of Cain. Genesis 4:26 mentions that men began "to call upon the name of the LORD" after the birth of Enos, the son of Seth.³⁹ It does not say that only the descendants of Seth called on the name of the LORD, only that "men" began to do so sometime after this. Certainly the Cainites were men. I see nothing in the Scriptures to support the idea that the Sethites were very much better than the Cainites, although that theme reoccurs in Judeo-Christian myth. This argument depends on interpreting Noah's "generations" two different ways in one verse, Genesis 6:9. The first "generations" must refer to Noah's sons and the second to his ancestry. That seems highly doubtful. On the other hand this interpretation is reasonable so far as there is a common theme in the Scriptures prohibiting intermarriage with the ungodly.

Fallen angels. This interpretation is based on the same data as are the previous interpretations, but takes a slightly broader—and better defined—definition of "the sons of God" plus the more traditional definition of *nephilim* as "giants." The phrase

³⁸ I suspect that *nephilim* should be translated "fallen ones" rather than "fellers" or "tyrants."

³⁹ There is some question as to whether the KJV translation of Genesis 4:26 is accurate. *Brenton's English Septuagint* reads, "And Seth had a son, and he called his name Enos: he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God." Others have suggested that it should be translated to read that men began to call themselves gods or that they began to use God's name in vain. It seems more than a little odd that men first began to worship and pray even as they became more corrupt, especially when the very same chapter contains an example of two men calling on God long before the birth of Enos.

“sons of God” is used eight other times in the KJV: three times in Job and five times in the New Testament.

- Job 1:6 – “...the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.”
- Job 2:1 – “...the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them...”
- Job 38:7 – “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”
- John 1:12 – “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”
- Romans 8:14 – “But as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”
- Romans 8:19 – “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”
- Philemon 2:15 – “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke...”
- 1 John 3:1-2 – “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

In Job, each use is obviously referring to angels, one of whom is Satan.⁴⁰ All of the New Testament uses, although using the Greek word *theos* instead of the Hebrew word *elohim*, refer to believers reborn by the action of the Holy Spirit. The implication is that a “son of God” is one whose creation can be directly attributable to God. With this understanding Adam, Yeshua, and the angels can all be called “sons of God” in a literal sense,⁴¹ while all believers can be called “sons of God” only in a spiritual sense until after the resurrection when our bodies too will be made new. The phrase “daughters of men” would therefore mean “daughters born through natural human processes.”

Because the use of the phrase “sons of God” seems to support it, and because the word *nephilim* is used also in Numbers 13:33 in the evident sense of “giants,” I believe this third interpretation to be the correct one. The sons of God were beings created directly by God who became corrupted and laid with human women who then gave birth to half-human, half-demon giants. As bizarre as this explanation

⁴⁰ Apparently all angels, upright or fallen, are periodically called before God for some purpose. The implications are startling for many Christians. Most understand that Satan can do nothing that God does not allow him to do, but the actual details are rather sketchy in their minds. The opening chapters of Job show that Satan and his demons still have direct access to the throne room of God, and remain accountable to God for their actions to the point of requiring his permission before mounting any kind of concerted attack on a believer.

⁴¹ Yeshua, of course, can also be called a “son of man,” because he was born of a woman even though his conception was through direct divine action. “Son of man” is nearly synonymous with “human being,” but may imply a closer affinity to Adam than what other men might have.

sounds, it seems to fit best with the rest of Scripture, and is supported by the stories of the giants that lived in Canaan even through King David's reign.

(See also 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.)

I will destroy man whom I have created... In light of the preceding, we can better understand why God chose to completely wipe out the Canaanites rather than converting or displacing them. They evidently had gone as far down the path of immorality as God would allow. They were actively fornicating with demons, the very same practice for which God here decided to wipe out nearly every living thing on the planet. Our procreative capacity is the one way in which we most intimately carry out the image of God, and God has punished its abuse more harshly than any other.

Noah: Genesis 6:9-11:32

Genesis 6:13

The end of all flesh... God destroyed nearly all living things on earth because of the sins of mankind because all living things on earth belong to the house of man. When mankind sins, the whole earth suffers; when a king sins, his kingdom suffers; and when a father sins, his family suffers. This is both a strength and a weakness of the patriarchal system. The house of a godly patriarch flourishes because of his godliness, while the house of a tyrant eventually comes to ruin. Never-the-less, patriarchy is the system that God designed and that we should be striving toward.

In correspondence dated February, 2000, S. John Butt wrote,

“The patriarchal order is essential...because the family is the most basic organic unit of the Church. Therefore, every family head must be considered part of the church leadership - in fact, in some ways its most important part. If patriarchal leadership is missing from the family it cannot be substituted for by the church leadership. The church leadership can help, but the only real solution is to help that family head to grow into a place of functioning in godly leadership for his family. If he is doing his job then his wife or wives and children will all be growing in the Lord and bringing forth fruit for the Kingdom.”⁴²

Genesis 6:18

...thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. Genesis does not describe Noah's family as especially righteous, although it is reasonable to believe that they were. (With the possible exception of Ham, of course. See Genesis 9:22-27.) The families of righteous men tend to be more righteous than the families of unrighteous men. The most convincing evidence of the character of Noah's family, however, is that they went along with his plan to build a giant boat contrary to common sense. They trusted Noah's judgment enough to stick by his side through one hundred years of ridicule and alienation. Most women today would leave their husband if he so much as quit his job to start a prison ministry or a homeless shelter. It would be almost unthinkable to stay with him while he gave up everything to pursue an unprecedented project with no conceivable benefit. How many women would even believe their husbands had heard from God, let alone support him in carrying out God's instructions? I do not mean to blame women. How many men could inspire their wives and children to such devotion? What kind of man must

⁴² Mr. Butt separately wrote that patriarchal order is the underlying strength behind righteous civil and religious government. “Patriarchal Order and Kingly Leadership.” (Bfree.org, <http://www.bfree.org/bfree/kingly.htm>. Accessed May 2000.)

Noah have been to inspire such loyalty in his wife and to have brought up such children?

I should also mention that Noah is the second verifiably monogamous man mentioned in Scripture. The first monogamist introduced death into the world, while the second presided over death's ultimate implementation. Both men were righteous overall, but their monogamy seems to be more of a practical consideration than anything else. Adam could not have two wives because polygyny was not to be the standard pattern for all families. Noah could not have two wives for two reasons: there were too few good women in the world, and he only took with him on the ark what was necessary for regeneration.

Genesis 9:21-27

I am certain that it was not merely Ham's disrespect of Noah that brought such a curse, but whether it was some severe indignity or an actual crime is not recorded. It is not important for us to know. However, there are three important points that are recorded and should be noted:

1. **He drank of the wine, and was drunken...** Noah brought something of this trouble on himself by his drunkenness.⁴³ The sins of mankind brought suffering on mankind and on creation. The sin of Noah brought suffering on himself and on his children.
2. **...the nakedness of his father...** Ham had apparently absorbed too much of the society from which he had escaped, and brought something of it with him. Also, the demons which had tempted mankind before the Flood had survived it to tempt them again afterward. Sexual sins being a particular weakness of men and particularly grievous to God, they are among the favorites of the enemy.
3. **Cursed be Canaan.** Noah's curse was not pronounced on Ham, but on his son, Canaan. There is a recurring idea throughout the Scriptures, that the father is often punished through his son.⁴⁴ Noah's drunkenness was punished through his son Ham. Ham's sin was punished through his son Canaan. David's sin was punished through his son, Absalom. In this case, Ham's sin might have been against the father-son relationship and so the object of the curse might have been that same relationship between Ham and Canaan.

Genesis 11:3

...let us make brick... God commanded that his altar be made with undressed, natural stone. Moses made a special point of Babel's use of all manufactured materials in their cultural icon and probable temple. Their great sin was in their

⁴³ I do not mean that he sinned in drinking wine, only in his *drunkenness*.

⁴⁴ The son is not punished for the sins of the father, but often suffers repercussions from his father's actions. Each of the sons listed here committed his own sins and was punished for them.

rejection of Providence, their substitution of man-made methods of unity and religion over God's ways. In marriage, we are free to adapt our houses to our individual circumstances and characters, but only within the bounds that God has set. There are some principles, which are inviolate. For example, substituting egalitarianism for patriarchy and coverture can only lead to broken families and disaster in the long run.

Genesis 11:29

And Abram and Nahor took them wives... Abram married his half-sister, and Nahor married his niece. The closer one gets to the time before the Flood, the less disapprobation is attached to close consanguinogamy. The relative purity of Terah's genes and those of his sons can be seen in their great lifespans. They did not live as long as Noah, but still lived more than twice as long as most men after him: Terah lived two-hundred and five years, and Abram lived one-hundred and seventy-five years. By comparing the lifespans of the patriarchs after the Flood, one can trace the decline of the race until it reaches a plateau at about the time of the Exodus. By the time of Sinai, about four-hundred years and ten generations after Abram, men were living for no more years than they do today, and incestuous marriages were no longer permitted.

Genesis 11:30

But Sarai was barren; she had no child. While barrenness may sometimes be the result of a curse brought on by sin, Sarai's was not. Like the blind man whom Yeshua healed so that God might be glorified, Sarai was barren so that Abram would have the time to develop into the man who God wanted him to be before Isaac was born and so that God would be glorified through that miraculous conception. That this development took so long was to the glory of God: there is no womb so barren that God cannot heal it.

Lech Lecha: Genesis 12-17

Genesis 12:13

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister... While it was true that Sarai was Abram's sister, his intent was to deceive the Egyptians into believing that she was not his wife. He thought that if the Egyptians believed Sarai to be unmarried, then they might let him live and only take her. Abram displayed his lack of faith in God's promise by risking his wife's integrity in order to save his own life. God had promised him an heir, and so he should have known that he would not be killed by the Egyptians. Possibly, Abram was not entirely at fault for this deception. His temporary repudiation of Sarai would be played out again in the national lives of Israel and Judah. God sent them into exile, where they served other gods, but he will restore them to himself at the right time.

Although Scripture never actually says that God approved of Abraham and Sarah's marriage, he chose the house of Abraham, and specifically Sarah, to bear the promised line that would eventually produce the Messiah. It does not seem reasonable to me to suppose that God seriously disapproved of their incest, although he later gave Moses a law against this very relationship. I believe the reason that Abraham's and Sarah's marriage was acceptable while later such marriages were not, is the same reason that Cain was able to marry his full sister. The human gene pool had not deteriorated to the point at which close consanguinity is dangerous. Several generations later, when Israel left Egypt, congenital defects were more common, and the risk was higher. As Yeshua would state centuries later, all of the Torah rests on the principles of love for God and others. A marriage between half siblings today would be hateful to the next generation. Apparently, the purpose of the law is not to prevent consanguinity so much as to prevent its results.

(See also Genesis 4:17.)

Genesis 12:15

...the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Sarai was taken to live in Pharaoh's house, but only in a state of semi-betrothal (v19). Apparently, it was a widespread practice for a wealthy man to take his prospective bride into his house—often against her will—as a sort of hostage in order to influence negotiations with her family and to forestall other potential suitors. Other possible reasons for this practice may have been to ensure the bride's purity and to watch for indications of sickness which might appear over time. The same practice can be seen in the similar events in Gerar (Genesis 20:1-18), in the story of Dinah and Shechem, and in the story of Queen Esther. There is something similar among modern polygynous families. A prospective bride might live with the groom and his family for a period of several months to a year so that she can be certain their lifestyle will suit her and so that any personality conflicts with existing wives might be made obvious before making a binding commitment.

Genesis 12:17

And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house... The consequences of Pharaoh's actions affected his entire house, even though he was unaware of any wrongdoing. It is often difficult to predict before-hand what consequences an action might have, so it is crucial that our every thought and action be subjected to the highest moral standards. Men must keep their thoughts and their eyes from likely error, assume that all women are unavailable until a betrothal commitment has been made or permission to court has been granted. Notice that God did not plague Pharaoh because of his polygyny, though he undoubtedly had many wives already. God only punished him for adultery.

Genesis 16:1

...she had an maid... Every servant described in the Scriptures as belonging to a woman among godly people was also a woman. The only men in the Scriptures ever described as being under the direct authority of a woman are children or men who live in corrupt societies such as described in Isaiah 3.

Genesis 16:2

...the LORD hath restrained me from bearing. Fertility is ultimately controlled by God. It was him who kept Sarai from conceiving all those years for his own glory.

...go in unto my maid... Abram's actions toward Hagar were further evidence that he had not yet reached the state of perfection to which God had called him. The problem with Hagar was two-fold: she was an Egyptian, and she was not the one through whom God promised to produce an heir for Abram. God had very specific plans for the makeup of his people, and Hagar was not a part of those plans.

Genesis 16:3

And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid... A slave in a godly house would be treated as something between a child and an enlisted soldier. They could be punished, given in marriage, or reassigned at the whim of their master, but they could not lawfully be severely beaten or otherwise mistreated. Since Hagar belonged to Sarai, it was certainly within her authority to give her to Abraham as a concubine. However, it was also within Abraham's authority to refuse, and that is what he should have done, not because there is necessarily anything immoral in the use of a concubine, but because such was not a part of the promise God made to Abram. He should have waited on God, and taken whatever wives and concubines he wanted after Isaac was born.

...ten years in the land of Canaan... The ten years given here includes the time spent in Egypt, likely less than a year in duration and not long after leaving Haran. He had paused only briefly in Canaan before going on to Egypt. Hagar, while still a

young girl, would have been given to Sarai by the Pharaoh some nine years before Sarai gave her to Abram. Probably Hagar would have been older than fifteen, but not yet twenty-five, and she had been a slave since birth. If she had been born in Abram's house instead of in Egypt, there might not have been such a problem. Unfortunately, her roots remained in Egypt with her family, from whom she had been forcibly removed, and she was not a suitable mate for a godly man.

Genesis 16:4

...her mistress was despised in her eyes. As noted above it is often assumed that barrenness is the result of some unnamed sin, either of the woman, of her husband, or of an ancestor of one or the other. Hagar probably assumed that this was the case with Sarai. This would explain—though certainly not justify—her change of attitude after conceiving Ishmael. It also seems probable to me that Abram treated Hagar in his usual generous manner, elevating her to a status equal or nearly equal to Sarai's. A slave suddenly elevated above her mistress is not likely to be pleasant.

Genesis 16:5

My wrong be upon thee. Sarai rightly placed the responsibility for keeping peace between her and Hagar at Abram's feet, although some of it was surely her own. It would normally not be appropriate for a wife to discipline her sister-wife, however Hagar was a slave still under the authority of Sarai. Abram had implicitly accepted some of that responsibility when he accepted Hagar as his concubine. It is the man's responsibility to keep peace in his house whether he has one wife or ten. Unfortunately, the task must be even more difficult when one of those wives is a slave to another; all judgments of equity or fairness will likely be skewed. All of the blame and responsibility cannot be put on Abram alone; some of it must also be put on Sarai and Hagar. The whole state of affairs came about at Sarai's prompting. She was obviously a wise and capable woman in most respects or Abram would not have leaned so much on her judgment, and God would not have chosen her as the mother of Isaac. In this matter, however, she abandoned godly wisdom in favor of common sense.⁴⁵

Hagar's behavior, though abominable, was predictable. Her obligations were divided between two masters, a situation which is bound to produce some resentment. Solomon wrote that if you fail to discipline a servant, he will eventually lack all discipline. He also wrote that "...an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress..." are two things under which the earth trembles. Adam Clarke suggested that Abram may have begun to actually favor Hagar over Sarai,⁴⁶ perhaps even beginning to believe as Hagar did, that Sarai was barren through some fault of her own. None of this excuses Hagar for her own

⁴⁵ I mean "common sense" in the way it is usually understood: what is generally and popularly held to make sense. I also mean "common" in that *common* sense is often inferior sense. Sarai's and Abram's actions were not sinful, but appear to have been unwise.

⁴⁶ Clarke, *Commentary*.

behavior, nor Ishmael for his. We are each responsible for our own actions, regardless of circumstances.

Genesis 16:6

...thy maid is in thy hand. Abram cowardly shirked his responsibility in this matter. The situation was partly his fault, and he had it within his authority to at least attempt to put it right. Instead, like Pilate some 2500 years later, he tried to wash his hands of what his office required of him.⁴⁷ Family troubles are not like bees. They do not go away if you ignore them. Ultimately this issue would come back to Abram magnified.

Genesis 16:9

Return to thy mistress... Hagar had been treated harshly, but evidently not so harshly as to justify abandoning her obligations to Sarai. He did not say, “Return to your husband,” or “your master,” but he said, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” The angel recognized Hagar’s servitude as valid before any relationship she had to Abram, and that servitude was not to be broken lightly. Evidently, neither Sarai nor Abram had neglected Hagar’s physical needs, nor had they severely abused her physically.

Genesis 16:10-14

I will multiply thy seed exceedingly... While recognizing the legitimacy of Hagar’s relationship with Sarai, the Angel also acknowledged that Hagar had been wronged. The manner in which Hagar was rewarded for returning to Sarai and repaid for the wrong done to her implies God’s like recognition of the legitimacy of her relationship with Abram. Isaac was not the only son of Abram to receive an inheritance directly from the hand of God, though he remained as the conduit of God’s promises of greatness and blessing. Those promises were made to Isaac through Abram long before his conception or birth, and the intervening birth of Ishmael did not change this. However, Isaac’s inheritance of these promises did not make Ishmael any less a son of Abram, and God recognized Ishmael’s place by promising him that he would also become a great nation.

Genesis 17:1

Walk before me, and be thou perfect. Whatever God had been waiting for had evidently arrived. I believe he was waiting for Abram to achieve a certain level of

⁴⁷ The parallels between these two stories are striking, but I am not sure what to make of them:

Torah Gospel Sarai accused Hagar Sanhedrin accused Yeshua Abram refused to judge Hagar Pilot refused to judge Yeshua Hagar returned to Sarai for judgment Yeshua returned to Pilate for judgment Abram dealt more harshly with Hagar than he was wanted. Pilot dealt more harshly with Yeshua than he was wanted. Hagar was exiled to what most would consider certain death, but God gave her new life. Yeshua was crucified and buried, but God resurrected him three days later.

maturity, or perfection. The Hebrew word used in this verse for “perfect” is *tamim* which also means “complete” or “whole” according to *Strong’s*. Abram was not perfect in the mathematical sense we usually have in mind when we use that word today, but he was perfect in that he had reached a state of spiritual maturity for which God had been preparing him since before he left Ur decades earlier. We can see in Ishmael’s character Abram’s lack of readiness to be the patriarch of God’s people. Sarai was barren for so long, not because of any physical or moral defect, but because Abram was not yet ready to be called the Friend of God.

Peter seemed to believe that Sarai’s character was worthy of emulation by all believing women, but this does not seem to have been a factor in God’s selection of this time for the accomplishment of this part of his promise to Abram. Sarai’s maturation was not thought important enough to mention, while Abram’s was. It is unclear if this silence is because Sarai had long before achieved a sufficient level of perfection, or if it is because her perfection was not a factor.

Genesis 17:5

...thy name shall be called Abraham... God demonstrated his authority over Abraham and the special relationship which he claimed with Abraham by giving him a new name. As with Adam, Eve, and the animals at the beginning of Creation, the naming of a thing is a demonstration of authority over it. A name, in the Biblical sense, is much more than a collection of syllables. God’s name at birth was not Yahweh because he had no birth. *I Am That I Am*. The name itself says that no one can give God a name because no one preceded him or has any authority over him. God named himself because he is self-existent. Adam named the animals because he preceded them in authority if not in time. Adam named Eve because he preceded her in both time and authority. God named Adam, Abraham, Sarah, and Israel because he is their Creator. He precedes them—and us—in every way.

Genesis 17:7

...thee and thy seed after thee... This demonstrates the authority of a father to bind his children and even all his descendants to a covenant, although the demonstration is somewhat weakened by God’s role in this covenant’s making. God has the authority to bind anyone to anything whenever he chooses. A man’s family belongs more to God than to him.

Genesis 17:10

Every man child among you shall be circumcised... The transgenerational nature of the covenant helped to dictate the form of its sign: all seed to pass through the circumcision automatically becomes a part of the covenant. Isaac’s membership in the covenant from the moment of conception strengthens his claim on its promises.

Circumcision also reinforces the nature of the covenant as one of blood. The covenant between God and Israel was initially sealed with Abraham in the blood of

animals and men, and is reconfirmed individually after the birth of every male by circumcision. In one respect, it can be said that the covenant with Abraham is confirmed through circumcision three times for every male believer: once when the semen passes through the circumcision of the father, once when the child is circumcised, and once again through circumcision of the heart and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (See my comments on Genesis 17:18.)

This covenant is not confirmed with the female at her birth because the final national identity of the female is determined by her covenant of marriage, which is also sealed by blood, in that case her own. When she marries, she takes on the nationality of her husband, and becomes an heir with him of the covenants of his fathers. In this light, the importance of sexual purity is obvious. A promiscuous girl not only denies her future husband something that should be exclusively his, but she denies herself the physical proof of membership in her husband's covenants, and she denies them both a certain degree of sanctity of marriage.

Every descendant of Adam joins the human race through the shed blood of his mother. The male descendants of Abraham and their wives join their nation through their own shed blood. And all of the children of Abraham, both physical and spiritual, join the Kingdom of God through the shed blood of the Messiah and the symbolic rebirth of baptism.

The qualitatively different nature of the New Covenant, which is established through Yeshua's blood, is partly evidenced by the nature of the blood which was shed. The marriage covenant is sealed in the blood of the bride, and the Noahide, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenants were sealed with the blood of animals and men. They all emphasize our fallen nature, and our dependence on God's mercy for our continued existence. The New Covenant, through which all of mankind is restored to potential fellowship with their Creator, was sealed with the blood of the Messiah who is both man and God. It is the fulfillment of previous covenants, in that our salvation—our redemption from condemnation—is realized in it through God's grace.

Genesis 17:12

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised... The number seven represents completion, while eight represents new beginnings. A boy is to be circumcised on the eighth day to indicate that his time as a natural man has ended and his new life as a member of the community of Abraham and an inheritor of the covenant has begun. A woman joins the nation of her husband on the day of her marriage.

Genesis 17:13

He that is born in thy house... God considered all those under Abraham's authority to be a part of his house. They were not asked their opinion of circumcision, and I am certain that many of the men among them did not approve. Boys and men alike were subject to this most personal exercise of Abraham's

authority over them. Grown children, if they had existed, would likewise have been given no real choice: either accept circumcision or leave his house. A child never really leaves his father's authority, so long as they acknowledge each other as father and son.

Genesis 17:15

As for Sarai thy wife... God demonstrated his own direct authority over Sarai by naming her. A man's authority over his wife and family is only delegated to him from God.

Genesis 17:17

...him that is an hundred years old? I do not believe it was Sarai's and Abram's age that was the barrier to conception because other patriarchs lived and prospered well past the age of 100. Jacob did not even marry until he was nearly eighty. What was so surprising about Isaac's conception was that his parents had gone for so many years already without conceiving. Abraham thought that if it had not happened in seventy years, how could it happen now?

Genesis 17:18

O that Ishmael might live before thee! Ishmael was unsuitable as the conduit of God's promise and Abraham's inheritance because he was the son of a slave and a pagan Egyptian. Sarah was God's chosen vessel because of her character, her breeding, her status as a free woman, and most importantly her faith in God and Abraham. The timing of Ishmael's and Abraham's circumcisions might have also been a factor, as Isaac was conceived after Abraham's circumcision.

Genesis 17:20

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. God apparently did not consider Ishmael a bastard, even if he was not eligible to inherit the promise. God honored Abraham and acknowledged Ishmael by promising to make him into a great nation.

Vayeira: Genesis 18-22

Genesis 18:9

Where is Sarah, thy wife? While the visitors spoke directly to Abraham as the head of his house, they wanted to make sure that Sarah was within earshot. Women can be used as prophetesses and even as leaders of the Church in extraordinary circumstances. God does not reveal himself only to men, even though men are his primary vehicles for direct action and communication toward his people. Whenever possible, scriptural confirmation and the agreement of two or more witnesses are important no matter the source of the prophecy.

Genesis 18:10

...according to the time of life... It had been many years since God first promised Abraham a son, and here, finally, was the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise: within the year Sarah would bear a son. The “time of life” either refers to the cycle of a single year, in which case Isaac would be born approximately one year later, or it refers to a normal period of gestation. I suspect the later, but in either case, the time was effectively at hand.

Genesis 18:11

Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age. As the Creator of all life, there is no barrier to fertility which God cannot overcome with the slightest of thoughts. If a man is impotent or a woman infertile, there is a reason for it. Infertility comes because of sin, age, or injury; or because God has a greater plan. This was the case with Abraham and Sarah. His plan required Isaac to be born under a certain set of circumstances, and it was to God’s greater glory that those circumstances came about in Abraham’s and Sarah’s old age.

Genesis 18:17

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do... The man of God, who orders his house after godly principles and who obeys God’s commands, will not be forsaken by God nor surprised by his judgments. He will be warned through scripture, through prophets, or through spiritual insight, and he and his house will be protected from the judgment that comes on the world around him.

Genesis 18:19

For I know him... Abraham was not going to be a blessing to the whole world only because God chose his line to introduce the Messiah, but also because Abraham was a godly patriarch. God saw Abraham’s potential long before it was realized and chose him for that reason. He was not righteous because God promised to bless the

world through him, but God blessed the world through him because he was righteous.

...he will command his children and his household after him... It is a measure of a godly man that he orders his house according to what is right and just. Such a man earns the respect of God, and his family will follow him in righteousness. The corollary is that, if a man does not rule his house, including wives, children, and servants, then he does not earn God's respect, and his family will follow him in wickedness.

Genesis 18:22-32

...wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? In a city of some thirty or forty thousands God found only one man who had not given himself to licentiousness. If God had found only ten men—less than one-tenth of one percent—he would have called the city redeemable. This shows the forbearance of God. Sodom was not destroyed capriciously, but was given every chance to redeem herself. Some call her destruction unjust and call God cruel and unloving; they ask how can God be love when he shows such hatred? They say such things because they do not understand love. They have in mind the indefinable slush of popular romance stories, which have as much to do with love as sugar has to do with nutrition. God's actions against Sodom, Gomorrah, and later, all of Canaan, demonstrate the love of a physician who removes a tumor or a gangrenous limb to save his patient's life. What love can a man have for a diseased limb? If he loves the rest of his body, he cuts it off as God removed Sodom, showing love for her neighbors. Even then, God is much more capable than any human surgeon. If even a relatively small percentage of your leg is infected, your doctor will order the whole thing removed. But all God needs to redeem the whole limb is one tiny piece of healthy tissue. All that was healthy in Sodom was one man. His daughters and wife were too far gone, but God still saved some of them for Lot's sake. He would have saved them all if they had been willing. God gave them a choice to escape and they refused, so a few of the redeemable were destroyed by their own choice along with the reprobate. If Lot, a man whom Peter called righteous and just, had refused to leave, thinking he might convert a few of the Sodomites before the end, then he too would have been destroyed. When it finally rains, it rains on everyone.

Genesis 19:1-3

...turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house... By his hospitality Lot demonstrated that he was not as far down the path of unrighteousness as were his neighbors. The angels' stated intent to spend the night in the square was a test of the moral state of the inhabitants of the city. Only Lot passed. Notice that Lot knowingly put his own family at risk for the sake of strangers. Generally the wellbeing of a man's family should be among his first concerns, but when the need is great, we cannot turn our eyes away from those in need only to spare our family. Husbands, do not use your family as an excuse to avoid what needs to be done. Wives, do not

resent God's imperatives on your husband when they inconvenience you. Your husband's service to God must always come before his service to you.

Genesis 19:4-11

The sins of Sodom displayed here:

1. Sexual immorality – Homosexuality and general sexual license were rampant.
2. Violence – The intended rape and murder of the angels, the near-destruction of Lot's house, and the probable murder of Lot and his family. These first two are also given as God's reason for the Flood. A society such as ours, which promotes sex and violence as compatible, must be very close to destruction.
3. Hatred – Their malignity to strangers must have been legendary and might have even been the cause of the invasion of chapter fourteen. Although I have listed this offense lastly, and it seems to us today to be a trifle compared to the previous two, it was the quality for which the angels first tested and so might have been the greatest in God's eyes.

Genesis 19:8

I have two daughters which have not known man. Lot, whom Peter called just and righteous (2 Peter 2:7-8), is often the focus of attacks by scoffers who ask, "How can God be just if he approves of Lot sending his own daughters out to be raped and murdered?" I refer the scoffer to what I have written immediately above and under Genesis 19:1-3, and remind him that God's wisdom is not man's wisdom. God apparently values a man who would sacrifice his own family for the sake of innocent strangers over a man who does the opposite. "Love your neighbor as yourself," is a beginning to love, but to truly love God as he commanded in Deuteronomy 10 and Mark 12, requires that we love our neighbors more than we love ourselves, and that we be willing to sacrifice our limbs (i.e. our families) in place of theirs when necessary. It was not that Lot did not love his daughters nor think their rape and murder to be an evil thing. But rather, he believed that the same done to these strangers would be an even worse crime. In the end, remember that it was not necessary for Lot to send his daughters out. Perhaps he knew that the Sodomites were not interested in women. After all, his daughters had lived in the city all their lives and were still virgins. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son for his God, and so passed his test, and God spared Isaac. Here, too, Lot passed a test by being willing to give up his own children for strangers. God spared Lot's unmarried daughters and would have spared his other daughters along with their families if they had been willing to listen.

On the other hand, I wonder why Lot did not offer himself. It might be as I suggested above, that Lot knew they were not interested in women, or it could be that he was simply not as righteous as Abraham. We know from everyday experience with friends, family, and neighbors that most people really do not put

their children's needs above their own, no matter what they might say to the contrary. They too often cannot even be bothered to give up a few luxuries for the sake of a more godly education. Like them, Lot was guilty of misplaced priorities or else he would not have been in Sodom at all.

It is important to avoid overly close associations with the ungodly, but it is also important to seek out their opposite. If Lot had surrounded himself with godly people, he would not have been in such compromising circumstances.

Genesis 19:12

Hast thou any besides? Even though they themselves were not righteous men, God was willing to save the sons-in-law for Lot's sake. The angels were willing to include whatever other family Lot had as part of his house. This is similar to Paul's statement that the husband or wife of a convert to Christ is sanctified through the believing spouse. I do not believe they are automatically saved from eternal damnation, but they might share in some of the blessings of the believer and have an ongoing open invitation to believe so long as they remain.

Genesis 19:14

...and spake unto his sons in law... Either Lot's daughters were only visiting with him at the time, or he had at least two other daughters. He apparently had no sons. His absent daughters were not automatically saved because they were his daughters. They did not leave the city (repent from sin) when they were told, and so they died with their husbands because their husbands did not believe Lot's warning.

Genesis 19:16

...and upon the hand of his wife... God calls each one of us individually, as well as by families and nations. While a man's family is placed under his authority, they never really belong to him. Ultimately, he can neither save them nor damn them by what he does. God is always there to watch over what is his. Good husbands and fathers can take comfort in that because God will make up for our human inadequacies. Abusive husbands and fathers should fear God's providence and the guardian angels because they see what he does even in secret. God is always on the side of the weak and defenseless against their oppressors.

Genesis 19:26

But his wife looked back from behind him... Paul wrote, "How knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" Lot brought his wife with him out of Sodom, but, of her own accord, she chose to look back, and so was lost. Although Lot placed his family in a compromising situation, his wife was responsible for her own actions in response.

Genesis 19:31-38

...that we may preserve seed of our father. Although Peter called Lot righteous, he was far from perfect. Particularly, he chose fellowship unwisely. He chose to live in a place full of immorality for the sake of financial gain, and he allowed his daughters to socialize with the Sodomites, even to marry them. Children are not missionaries or ambassadors. They are not equipped to filter out the world's influence on their own. If God commands Christians to be separate from the world, it is doubly vital to keep our children separate. We cannot put them into situations in which they are "unequally yoked" with unbelievers and still expect them to grow into God-fearing, morally-intact believers. There are good reasons for homeschooling and good reasons for church-supported schools, but there are few good reasons for Christians to put their children into government-run, godless schools to be indoctrinated and pressured into the ways of the world.

I have heard any number of excuses from parents with children in public schools.

- Children shouldn't grow up ignorant of the real world.
- I want to inoculate my child against the evils they will encounter as adults.
- I want my child to be well-adjusted.
- My wife can't afford to quit her job and stay home.
- I don't have the time to homeschool.
- Kids need to be around other kids their own age.
- Children need to be exposed to alternative points of view.
- My child is a missionary to other children.
- I can't afford it.

All of these excuses can be summed up in two words: compromise and selfishness. When you send your child to a public school, you are not inoculating him, you are infecting him; you are not preparing him, you are destroying him; you are not educating him, you are indoctrinating him; you are not being responsible, you are abdicating your responsibility. If you want to inoculate someone against a disease, you introduce him to it in a controlled, safe manner. You do not shut him in a room full of the diseased and dying to fend for his own health and security. God gave you a child, and you sold him for a little free time and a better house and car. "Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." That is not a promise to you because you are barely bringing him up at all. The National Education Association is bringing him up in the way that they think he should go. I guarantee you it is not God's way.

Lot probably thought he was doing a good job with his daughters, too. But you cannot live and participate in such a corrupt society and expect your children to be safe from it. Lot lived and worked in Sodom, and he brought up his daughters there, or at least he believed that he did. But it was Sodom, and not Lot, who brought up his daughters. Modern government-run schools might not be as bad as Sodom, but they are bad enough. I am sure there are exceptions, and that some people must or

should put their children in public schools for some reason, but they cannot be more than one in a hundred.

Genesis 20:3

Behold, thou art but a dead man... God was intent on preserving Sarah's integrity, and Abraham should have realized that by this time. Abimelech suffered consequences from taking Sarah into his house even though he did so in ignorance, and had not yet committed any actual offense. That is the seriousness with which God views adultery.⁴⁸

Be sure that you know your prospective spouse before you commit. Even if you sin in ignorance your actions still hold consequences. Know your intended's history and family. Do not rely on physical attraction or "love at first sight" because those things are transient and treacherous.

Genesis 20:16

Behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes... A man's spiritual covering over his wife should be obvious without references to cloth veils or outward signs of obeisance. No man should be able to mistake her for an unmarried woman.

Genesis 20:17-18

For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs... This is an example of barrenness as the result of a curse, and why Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah all prayed so fervently for children. They did not want to appear to be unrepentant sinners in the eyes of outsiders. It is important to note that in none of these four cases were the women directly to blame. Abimelech's women were barren because of his actions. Sarah was barren because God had a purpose in waiting. Rachel and Hannah might have been barren because of their husbands' favoritism. Men have a great deal of power over their house, whether they know it or acknowledge it. While we should never try to blame each other for these things, if there is blame at all, it is as likely the husband's as the wife's.

Genesis 21:3

And Abraham called the name of his son... Abraham exercised his delegated authority over his wife and family by giving his son the name that God had chosen.

Genesis 21:11

...because of his son. Abraham, even at this stage in his progress toward perfection, viewed his marriage to Hagar as legitimate, and he loved Ishmael his son. It is interesting, though, that he was not grieved so much at the loss of Hagar as he was by the loss of his son. Hagar was his wife, but also Sarah's slave, and he had no

⁴⁸ It is also evident that God holds all men accountable for obedience to his law, and not the Jews only.

singular attachment to her. Hagar's lack of other children underscores the nature of their relationship, although some rabbinic sources argue otherwise.

Genesis 21:12

Let it not be grievous in thy sight... Not because Ishmael was not deserving of Abraham's grief, but because God promised to watch over him and bless him as Abraham's legitimate son.

In all that Sarah hath said unto thee... Abraham was not to listen to Sarah because of any authority that she had over him, but because in this instance she spoke the will of God, and it had been her voice that initiated the problem.

...in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Ishmael could not inherit as Abraham's first born for three reasons:

- He was not the son that God had promised. God specifically said that Sarah would bear a son. Ishmael was born into Sarah's house, but he was not born by Sarah.
- He was the son of a slave. As Abraham said in his prayer to God for a son, a slave can inherit if there is no one else, but the son of a free wife will always inherit as the first born ahead of the son of a concubine.
- He was not a righteous man. His ill treatment of Isaac demonstrated his character, some of which he no doubt absorbed from Egypt's paganism by way of his mother's influence.

Genesis 21:13

...because he is thy seed. God again recognized Ishmael as Abraham's legitimate son and promised to make him into a nation for Abraham's sake. Had Ishmael remained in the house of Abraham, such a blessing would have been difficult at best. Isaac was destined to win any conflict between them, handicapping Ishmael and his house. Separated, they were both able to grow into great nations which continue to play their parts in God's plan even today.

Genesis 21:14

...and sent her away. God hates divorce like he hates death, and, like death, divorce is sometimes a necessary consequence of events. There was no hope for any good to come out of Abraham keeping Hagar and Ishmael in his house. Hagar was only hostile toward Sarah, and Ishmael was only hostile toward Isaac. The only practical solution was divorce.

I have always wondered why Abraham did not send Hagar and Ishmael away with a camel or two and greater provisions. But Abraham was far closer to God and probably far more intelligent than you or I. The answer must lie in his relationship with God. He believed completely and obeyed unquestioningly. God told Abraham to listen to Sarah, and he said that he would make Ishmael into a great nation. These two statements taken together meant that Abraham must drive—not simply send her away or ask her to leave—Hagar and Ishmael away, and trust God for their well-

being. We must not allow our “common” sense or our emotions to interfere with what is right. Our Savior said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), and Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience, as in this incident, sometimes requires sacrifice, but we do not sacrifice for the sake of sacrificing. We sacrifice because God told us to do it. Obedience to God beyond all human reason might cost you your family, your job, your friends, and your home, but in the end you will be blessed by God beyond anything you could possibly lose. Trust in him. Do as he tells you.⁴⁹

Genesis 21:21

...his mother took him a wife... Since Abraham had divorced Hagar, Ishmael had no one to fill the traditional roles of the father. In this case it was perfectly acceptable for Hagar to fill that role. She selected an Egyptian wife for him because she herself was an Egyptian. It was the custom for parents to select a wife for their son from among their own people and often from among his cousins. Marriage among close kin might not be so desirable anymore, but the general principle of marriage within one’s ideological and theological kin will always be sound.

Genesis 22:2

...thine only son Isaac... Not that Ishmael ceased being Abraham’s son, but that Isaac was always the only heir of the divine promises.

...whom thou lovest... The first mention of love in the Bible is of that love between a father and son. I do not know if that is significant, except in that there was never any mention of love between Adam and Eve or between Abraham and Sarah, although it is evident that such love existed.

(See Genesis 24:67 for the second mention of love, which is between a man and woman *after* marriage, but not before.)

Genesis 22:3

Isaac his son... Once more Abraham’s commitment to God was put to the test. Who was more important to him, God or his family? His answer was evident in his actions, as are all true statements of faith. If God had allowed Abraham to carry out the sacrifice of Isaac, no doubt Abraham would have lost Sarah as well. I doubt that he consulted with her, but simply obeyed God. If he did tell her what he was about to do, then her character must have been even more remarkable. Either she trusted Abraham without question, or she obeyed him without question, which amounts to the same thing. Since Scripture is silent, it seems likely that she simply did not know what Abraham intended to do.

⁴⁹ Keith Green sang, “I pledge my head to heaven for the Gospel, and I ask no man on Earth to fill my needs. Like the sparrow up above, I am enveloped in his love, and I trust him like those little ones he feeds...No matter, whatever the cost... I pledge my son, I pledge my wife, I pledge my head to heaven for the Gospel.” “Pledge My Head to Heaven”. *Pledge My Head to Heaven*. (Pretty Good Records, 1980.)

Genesis 22:16-18

...hast not withheld thy son, thine only son. Obedience to God must come before all else. If Abraham had chosen to spare his wife's feelings and his son's life, then he would have missed out on one of the greatest blessings in history. God would have rejected him as unworthy and chosen someone else through whom to establish his people and give his Messiah to the world.

I will multiply thy seed... A great posterity is a great reward and a blessing. Paul used this passage to teach about the single "seed" of the Messiah, through whom we can all become children of Abraham, but that is not the only intended meaning. The immediate context is that Abraham's physical descendants would constitute a collection of great peoples. A multiplied seed is universally called a blessing in the Scriptures. Many children are a reward from God, contrary to the zeitgeist of the whole industrialized world which calls a family with more than two children irresponsible and foolish. My God, give me children. I would rather receive ten blessings from Heaven than ten-thousand praises from men.

...thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. Twice in one verse, God blessed Abraham with the opposite of what modern man calls wisdom. The hired administrators of our children actively discourage aggressive competition, in which one side wins and the other loses. In words that imply violence, death, conquest, and subjugation, God promised that Israel as a nation, as well as Abraham's one seed, Yeshua, would be victorious over their enemies. We must reject the ideals of pop-psychologists and pacifists. Instead, we must teach our sons and daughters to take the offensive against the world and its master. Make this blessing a part of your son's circumcision or marriage or your daughters christening, coming out, betrothal, or marriage:

"Thou art my son, child of Abraham and of God. May thou be the father of a multitude, and may thy seed possess the gates of your enemies."

Genesis 22:20-23

And Bethuel begat Rebekah... There is a minority Jewish tradition that Rebekah was only three years old when she married Isaac. They base this idea on assuming all of the events of chapters twenty-two and twenty-three happened in quick succession, but it seems much more reasonable that there was one or more significant gaps of time. All we really know is that there were five sequential events separated by mostly unknown time periods: the Akeda, unknown time, Rebekah's birth, unknown time, Rebekah's birth told to Abraham, unknown time, Sarah's death, three years, and lastly Rebekah's marriage to Isaac. God's example is that a man should wait until his bride has physically matured before he marries her, and there is no reason to think that Isaac did anything differently.

(See also Ezekiel 16:7-8.)

Genesis 22:24

And his concubine... In describing the family of Bethuel, God had another opportunity to tell us of the corruption of polygyny, but he did not. Bethuel, a polygamist and slaveholder, was among the best of men,⁵⁰ and his daughter was personally and specifically selected by God to be the mother of his chosen people and his Messiah. Rahab, a prostitute, was also chosen to be the ancestor of the Messiah, but God clearly condemned her profession. Nowhere in the Scriptures did God condemn the many polygamists. Instead, he blessed and praised them.

⁵⁰ Consider the many great people who came from this house: Abraham, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, and, many years later, the prophet Balaam. All of these people were obviously very close to God, although the nature of Balaam's relationship is certainly questionable. I do not believe that God revealed himself to Abraham out of the blue, but that Abraham and his fathers already knew God well. They might have mixed idolatry with their worship, but so does ninety percent of modern Christendom.

Chayei Sarah: Genesis 23:1-25:18

Genesis 23:1

And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old. Sarah's age at her death shows that she shared something of the genetic wholeness that allowed her and Abraham to reproduce without ill effect.

Jewish tradition teaches that Sarah's age was given in this particular formula to emphasize three facets of her personality: the hundred-year-old woman of wisdom, the twenty-year-old woman of strength and vitality, and the seven-year-old girl of faith, innocence, and beauty. These are characteristics of the ideal woman.

Genesis 23:2

And Sarah died... I have heard that not much is told of Abraham after the death of Sarah so that Abraham was no longer a vital force without her, implying that there is only one true mate for every person. In reality, the opposite seems to be the case. This is the sequence of events given at the end of Abraham's story:

- Akeda
- The death and burial of Sarah
- Marriage of Isaac
- Distribution of inheritances
- Death and burial

If any event marks the end of Abraham's significance to the continuing redemption story, it must be Isaac's marriage and not Sarah's death. I will go a step further and say that Sarah's significance also ended at Isaac's marriage. Their story reached its climax in the Akeda and the rest of the narrative is concerned with handing the Promise to the next generation.

...in Kirjatharba... Abraham was apparently in Beersheba at the time of Sarah's death. Some believe that they separated over the events on Mount Moriah. Alternatively, Abraham's business endeavors might have required him to travel or Sarah might have had business of her own in Kirjatharba. Having many servants and only one grown son and no grandchildren, I doubt that she would have spent all—or even very much—of her time in household chores. She likely participated in Abraham's business and carried on economic ventures of her own.

(See also Proverbs 31.)

Genesis 24:1

And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age. Abraham was one hundred and forty years old at this point, and was described as "well stricken in age." It seems unlikely that he was still fathering children, but that is by no means certain. As evidenced by his marriage to Keturah and at least one other woman, and the many other children he fathered, he remained quite virile for many years after

Isaac's birth. God did not give him the ability to accomplish his assignment and then immediately take the ability away again. Like the faithful servant of Matthew 25:21, through Keturah, Abraham was tangibly rewarded for his faithfulness many times over.

Genesis 24:2

...that ruled over all that he had... I find it curious that Eliezer, and not Isaac, ruled Abraham's house. The relationship between them must have been awkward at times. We already know that Eliezer was a trusted servant, and had probably been with Abraham for more than sixty years. There is no doubt that he was a wise and godly man, and a good choice to manage Abraham's substantial holdings and to find Isaac's wife. But when he returned with Rebekah, Eliezer called Isaac "master" even while Isaac, who had never even been consulted on the matter, acknowledged Abraham's authority in Eliezer by unquestioningly accepting his new bride. Isaac's and Eliezer's behavior illustrates three things about delegated authority among God's people. First, it illustrates the proper workings of a godly patriarch's house, in which the patriarch's authority, whether held directly or delegated, is honored by all. Second, it illustrates the proper workings of God's Church, in which every believer is called to submit to every other, but especially to those whom God has specially chosen as our leaders. Third, it illustrates the proper workings of a godly household, in which wife and children submit willingly to God's authority as it is delegated through the father of the home. As with Isaac and Eliezer, it does not matter to whom we believe God should have delegated authority. It only matters to whom God actually did delegate it.

It is apparent that Eliezer is a type of the Holy Spirit sent out to prepare a bride for the Son, but it is the Son who is given rule over all that the Father has. It almost sounds here as if Moses implies that the Spirit has been given that rule. This is a reflection of the Spirit's role in preparing the kingdom for the King's return. It is only a matter of time before the Spirit yields control of the Kingdom to the rightful King.

...thy hand under my thigh... Most commentators acknowledge that it is not really Abraham's thigh, but his genitals which is intended here. Unfortunately, they cannot agree on the real significance of the act. Some say it is an acknowledgment of Abraham's role as the progenitor of the Messiah, others that it appeals to the covenant of circumcision. I disagree with both of those views and assert one that might seem more obvious to the world outside of Christianity and Judaism. The phallus is a nearly universal symbol of power and authority. Our modern sensibilities tend to place such things in the same category with totem poles and stone idols, but I believe it to be an appropriate symbol. It is through reproduction that God blesses his people. Through it they gain power, wealth, and worldly authority. It differentiates the sexes, the male being divinely ordained as the head of his house. Placing one's hand "under the thigh" while making a vow is a powerful acknowledgment of subjugation. Eliezer acknowledged Abraham as his earthly sovereign, and placed himself completely at Abraham's disposal. It was an action

akin to placing another man's foot on your neck while you lie prostrate on the ground.

Genesis 24:3

...the daughters of the Canaanites... Abraham's seed was to displace the Canaanites rather than to assimilate them, or worse, to be assimilated by them. Isaac had to take a bride from among Abraham's relatives at Haran, the city of Nahor, partly to ensure a godly heritage for Isaac's children, and partly to ensure that they would be uncontaminated by the blood of the Sodomites and the Nephilim.

Genesis 24:4

...take a wife unto my son... Eliezer is a type of the Holy Spirit sent out by the Father to find and prepare a bride for the Son. The Spirit, in turn, exemplifies the role of mothers. Christ does not conform himself to us, but we to him, and the Spirit is the agent of our transformation. Ideally, it is the responsibility of the bride to conform to the ways of her husband's house, and not the reverse. After the bride's own parents, her husband's mother should be the primary party responsible for her loving, understanding, and patient instruction.

Genesis 24:5

Peradventure the woman will not be willing... Moses gives no hint that the prospective bride would be forced into marriage by her relatives or carried off in a night raid. Eliezer apparently assumed that the choice would be the girl's.

Must I needs bring thy son... Marriage between two people who had never even seen each other was not completely unknown, but still very unusual. It is a reasonable request to ask to meet the groom, and even spend much time with him, before agreeing to a marriage.

There is another tradition that Eliezer had a daughter and hoped Abraham would answer in the negative. Perhaps he would be open to a match with his daughter instead of Rebekah.

Genesis 24:8

...if the woman will not be willing to follow thee... Abraham confirmed Eliezer's assumption that the bride should be given a choice in marriage. He does not appear to have been concerned about the bride's father. Either he did not expect her father to refuse or his assent was a trivial thing compared to that of the bride. It is also significant that Eliezer did not ask, "What if Isaac will not have her?" Isaac's assent to his father's wishes is assumed by all parties involved.

...bring not my son thither again. A journey of such distance could be hazardous in the days before paved and lighted roads. It is very likely that Nahor or Bethuel would have asked (or even demanded) that Isaac stay with them for an

extended period of time. It was very important that Isaac not leave the Promised Land so that their claim to it would not be compromised.

Genesis 24:9

...under the thigh of Abraham his master... See Genesis 24:2.

Genesis 24:10

...all the goods of his master... So complete was the authority Eliezer carried that everything Abraham owned was under his control. Even Abraham's son. He chose Isaac's bride and chose the bride price that he would give for her.

Genesis 24:11

...by a well of water... Throughout the history of the Middle East, wells appear to have been a common place to meet available women. Jacob found Rachel at this very same well, and nearly two thousand years later, it would be considered socially inappropriate for Yeshua to talk to a woman at another well. This well can be seen metaphorically as the Spirit of God that lives within his people. It is only appropriate for a believer to marry a fellow believer. Abraham returned to the well of his people to find a wife for Isaac. We must return to the well of the Spirit to find wives and husbands for ourselves and our children, and we must teach them to do the same.

In another sense, it is through rebirth in the Spirit, symbolized by baptism in water, that we are betrothed to our Savior. Each believer goes to the well of the Spirit to drink of the Living Water and be united with Yeshua.

Genesis 24:12

...send me good speed this day... It is important to ask God for his guidance through every step in life, especially in major decisions such as marriage. It is also acceptable in those major decisions to ask God for a sign, to clarify his guidance. God granted signs to Moses, Gideon, Hezekiah, and others. Here he granted a sign to Eliezer in choosing a bride for Isaac.

Genesis 24:13

...I stand here by the well of water... Even though Eliezer asked for a sign from God, he did not expect God to simply deliver the girl to his tent. He knew what kind of girl was required and from what source. Like Jehoshaphat who trusted God but was required to show up at the battle in full arms (2 Chronicles 20:16-17), Eliezer went to the well of Haran to look for the girl that God would choose. If a man would have a godly bride, then he should pray to God. If he then goes to look for her at the local singles bar, he should not be surprised when God does not send her there to meet him. The place to look for a godly bride is among godly people, at the well of the Spirit-filled. The same rule applies to women. There is no sufficient excuse for looking for a husband outside of God's people.

Genesis 24:14-15

And let it come to pass... Eliezer was not only asking God for a sign, but he was asking God to provide a girl with particular qualities: generosity and service. God so approved of his request that it was granted before he had finished it. It is not wrong to ask our Father for good things. If a man asks God for a good wife, should he expect God to give him a jealous nag? If he ask for an egg, will he receive a scorpion (Luke 11:12)? It might be that God has specific plans for you that might require unpleasantness, such as what he required of Hosea. In the end we must trust God that all things work out for the good. Whatever comes between now and then, it is certainly God's will that you pray for blessings, and what greater blessing can a man have than a good woman to be his wife?

...she that thou hast appointed... Sometimes there really is one special person specifically chosen by God to be the spouse of another—the proverbial match made in heaven. I do not believe that is the norm except for those who have complete trust in God and who ask him to provide the most suitable match.

...Abraham's brother... God chose Isaac's wife from Abraham's family. In fact, three generations of wives were specifically chosen by God from this same family: Sarai, Rebekah, and Rachel. One explanation is that God was breeding certain characteristics into his people, specifically generosity and hospitality. An alternative explanation is that this family was spiritually among the best available, being the root of Abraham's faith in God. Ancient traditions tend to support the former, but the latter is not without merit, especially considering the metaphor of the well. Both explanations are probably true.

Genesis 24:16

...very fair to look upon... I wrote above that it is not wrong to ask God for good things, but be careful for what you ask and be even more careful from what motives you ask. Had Eliezer prayed to God for a beautiful wife for Isaac, he might have found only physical beauty. He would have asked unwisely out of purely physical motives. Instead he asked for a kind and generous wife, and God provided one who was also physically beautiful. This is similar to Solomon's request for wisdom. Had he asked for riches, he would have received only riches. Since he asked for wisdom to do God's will, he received riches in addition to wisdom. Inner beauty should be a man's first priority in looking for a wife. Outer beauty is in the eye of the beholder and a wise man will see his wife's inner beauty projected onto the physical.

...a virgin, neither had any man known her. This is not as superfluous as it sounds in English. The Hebrew word for virgin, *bethulah*, by implication refers to a girl who has never been with a man, but its literal meaning is closer to a girl who has never been married. These words could have been loosely translated, "...an unmarried, eligible girl, who had never been with a man." Even so, Rebekah's virginity would have been implied without the second clause, so why was it

included? I suspect the writer wanted to emphasize her purity, like saying, “Pure and undefiled.”

Genesis 24:17

The servant ran to meet her... Eliezer was proactive—eager even—to encourage the fulfillment of the sign he desired. I suspect that he saw her beauty and said a silent, unrecorded prayer as he ran, “Lord, let her be the one!”

Genesis 24:18-20

...she hastened, and let down her pitcher... Rebekah did not respond resentfully or fearfully to this stranger running to her asking for her water. As eagerly as he had responded to her appearance, she responded to his request, and freely offered to water all of his camels for him as well. Water is heavy and it could not have been easy drawing enough water for ten camels. Yet she made no complaints about this man who allowed a young girl to do his work, even though he had other, stronger men with him. She volunteered for the work, and performed it quickly. Contrast Rebekah’s behavior to that of most modern western women who believe themselves entitled to be coddled by men privately, professionally, athletically, and legally. Rebekah placed the needs of this stranger far above her own. The modern woman places her every whim above the needs of all others.

Genesis 24:22

...ten shekels weight of gold. This was an expensive gift indeed, and must have been understood immediately by Rebekah to be more than a simple payment for drawing water. Considering that in cotemporaneous Sumer four and one-half shekels of silver purchased a house and plot of land, and that ten shekels of silver purchased two slaves, a gift of ten shekels of gold was clearly more than a mere tip for her assistance.⁵¹ It was meant to be a bride-price, and I am certain that Rebekah understood that. Normally the bride-price would have been negotiated with the bride’s father and eldest brother, but the price Eliezer volunteered was probably so much higher than anything they would have demanded that negotiation was irrelevant.

Genesis 24:23-25

...room to lodge in. Imagine a teen-aged girl today being approached by an elderly man with what appeared to be a marriage proposal. The man would likely be arrested. Rebekah at this point probably suspected she was being asked to marry either Eliezer or someone he represented. When he asked if he could come and stay

⁵¹ George Aaron Barton, “Contracts,” in *Assyrian and Babylonian Literature: Selected Transactions With a Critical Introduction by Robert Francis Harper*. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1904, pp 256-276. As quoted in the “Ancient History Sourcebook: A Collection of Contracts from Mesopotamia, c. 2300 to 428 BCE,” <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/mesopotamia-contracts.html>. Accessed 29 June 2004.)

at her home, her reasonable suspicion would have been confirmed. Despite his great age, however, Rebekah did not hesitate to offer him a place to stay. She might have been attracted by his obvious wealth, but I think it more likely that she was open to the leading of God's Spirit and was naturally a generous person.

Note that Rebekah did not say she would have to consult with her father, but she immediately offered Eliezer a place to stay. She was either a rebellious youth who did not care what her father thought, or else her father trusted her with a great deal of responsibility for his household. The former is ridiculous. This incident gives the lie to the idea that patriarchs are misogynists who plot to keep women in line. Rebekah, a young girl, was free to talk to strange men, accept gifts from them, and invite them to lodge at her father's house.⁵²

Genesis 24:27

...who hath not left destitute my master... Children are a blessing from God and barrenness is a curse. Obviously Abraham was not financially or socially destitute, so Eliezer meant that God was showing his mercy and the truth of his promise by providing a wife for Isaac and an heir to the promise.

...the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren. At this point there could no longer be any doubt as to Eliezer's purpose. A trusted servant of the very elderly Abraham had been sent on a long journey to seek out Abraham's relatives so that Abraham would not be left without an heir, then had put a fortune in gold around Rebekah's arms. What else could it mean but that he wished her to be the wife of Abraham's son or grandson?

Genesis 24:28

...her mother's house... The homes of the patriarchs were organized according to the wives, with each wife having her own tent and sub-household. Evidently this practice was carried over from their ancestors in Mesopotamia.

Genesis 24:29

And Rebekah had a brother... I have heard, though I cannot confirm, that it was the practice for a girl's eldest brother to take part in marriage negotiations along with her father. Certainly if a girl's father is dead, then her brother would take his place as her protector and head.

Genesis 24:31

...thou blessed of the LORD. Laban might have been somewhat motivated by greed, but he knew of Abraham's God. Abraham's kin were not the complete pagans they are sometimes supposed to be. Hundreds of years before God revealed himself to Moses and Pharaoh, Laban knew the name Yahweh.

⁵² Which sounds beyond foolish to me, but that is beside the point.

Genesis 24:43

...when the virgin cometh forth to draw... A girl is not to be married before she has matured, but only when she has “come forth to draw.” We are told to love one another as ourselves, and to love our wives as Christ loved the Church. God came for his bride in Egypt after she had matured, and Christ will not come for his bride until she has matured. Eliezer did not go searching through the city for Isaac’s bride, but waited by the well for her to come out. I find Rashi’s notion that Rebekah was only three years old when she married Isaac to be absurd. Another common estimate of fourteen is far more likely, but still young for a fully mature girl.⁵³ I believe that she was probably somewhere between fourteen and twenty years old. This is a pattern for all men, who must wait for their brides to “come forth” to sexual maturity.

Genesis 24:49

...if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master... Before a girl can be married, her guardian, whether father, mother, or brother, must give his consent.

Genesis 24:52

...when Abraham’s servant heard their words... Rebekah’s character was of such obviously exceptional quality that Eliezer’s only appropriate response was to fall on his face and worship the Lord who had arranged this marriage.

Genesis 24:53

...jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment... Contrary to popular western opinion, the practice of a bride price does not go hand-in-hand with a low level of respect for women. The actual situation was exactly the opposite: a bride price elevated the status and value of women. Something of true value is never free. In a society which only practices the dowry, as was sometimes the case in Europe, women are under-valued. Men desire the daughters of wealthy families for the large dowry they might bring, and parents dreaded the birth of a girl for the same reason. In actuality, the bride price acted as assurance to the bride and her family that she was marrying a man of substance who valued her, and, with her dowry, doubled as an insurance policy against abandonment or the death of her husband.⁵⁴

It is curious that Eliezer gave gifts to Rebekah, Laban, and their mother, but none to Bethuel. Some rabbis have speculated that the Bethuel mentioned here is actually another brother of the same name and that their father was dead. The text, however, gives the father’s name and then talks of Bethuel without any hint that this is a different man. I suspect that the gifts Eliezer gave to Rebekah might have actually

⁵³ Emil G. Hirsch and M. Seligsohn, “Rebekah”. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=146&letter=R>. Accessed 27 June 2006.)

⁵⁴ Diane Hughes, “Domestic Ideals and Social Behavior: Evidence from Medieval Genoa.” *The Family in History*. Ed. Charles E. Rosenberg. (Philadelphia: 1975.) 118-131.

been the bride price intended for Bethuel, her father, but redirected to Rebekah as her dowry.⁵⁵

Genesis 24:55-58

Let the damsel abide with us... Some rabbis have taught that the actual meaning here is ten months instead of ten days. However, the plain meaning seems to be a week to ten days, and this interpretation is supported by the Septuagint. Ten days in which to say goodbye to a daughter and sister does not seem unreasonable. On the other hand, throughout Genesis this family demonstrated a propensity for guile. I am certain that is why Abraham did not wish Isaac to go to Haran: he feared they would trap him somehow into staying with them rather than returning to Canaan. Eliezer probably saw this attempt to get Rebekah to stay awhile as an attempt to bring Isaac (and Abraham's wealth) to them, to get the groom to conform to the bride. Rebekah also understood what her brother and mother were trying to do, and refused to participate: further evidence of her high character.

Wilt thou go with this man? Here, Rebekah's choice is made plain. Marriage should be between willing parties. Both bride and groom should be given a chance to consent, and should not be forced into a marriage against their wills.

Genesis 24:59

...and her nurse... This nurse, Deborah, was probably Rebekah's caretaker and teacher as a child, sent to accompany her in lieu of her mother.

Genesis 24:60

And they blessed Rebekah... The most curious thing to me about this blessing is that they used nearly the same words that God had used to bless Abraham. Rebekah did indeed become the mother of thousands of millions. A very large portion of the population of the world can claim to be descended from the two sons of Rebekah.

...thy seed... This is the second time the Bible references the seed of a woman. (See Genesis 3:15.) Whether the people who spoke this blessing understood the exact nature of the genetic merger involved in conception is unclear. "Seed" was (and is) a generic term meaning both semen and offspring. Rebekah's family probably meant the blessing strictly in the natural, however there is a spiritual meaning here as well. The seed of the woman mentioned in Genesis 3:15 refers to the virgin-born Messiah, and God used these people thousands of years later to deliver another prophecy along the same lines.

⁵⁵ This supposition is supported by Jack Goody. Bride price was often redirected to the bride via the father. In this case, Eliezer might have simply bypassed the father altogether. Chapter two of Goody's book contains a great deal of information on the bride-price and dowry. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). 12.

Genesis 24:61

...and her damsels... These damsels did not include Deborah, the nurse of verse 59, as they were much younger. It was common practice among wealthier families to send a young servant girl along with their daughter as a part of her dowry. This servant would be her mistress's personal assistant and become the groom's concubine if the bride proved to be barren. Having just become substantially wealthier than they had been two days before, Rebekah's family could afford to send at least three servants with her: Deborah and the two or more damsels mentioned here.

Genesis 24:62

...the well Lahairoi... Had Isaac been conducting his own search for a wife at the Well of the Living One Seeing Me?⁵⁶ While Isaac lived at a remote location, Abraham thought nothing of sending his servant to find a wife for his son. He did not ask for Isaac's approval nor even his input, perhaps because Isaac's search for a wife was proving unfruitful. Here is another possible pattern for men seeking wives today. While Isaac might have gone to a good well, he did not possess the experience and discernment that his father and Eliezer had gained in their years. He learned to trust Abraham's judgment and accepted Rebekah unquestioningly after Eliezer told him of the events in Haran. I do not believe that Abraham would have forced Isaac to accept Rebekah if he had found her objectionable, but his trust in Eliezer made that an unlikely outcome.

Genesis 24:64-65

...she lighted off the camel. As a show of respect for Isaac, Rebekah dismounted so as not to appear to look down at him. If this had been any other man except perhaps Abraham, she might have remained in her seat.

...she took a veil, and covered herself. This was not simply a hat as some assert that Paul means in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. It was more like a shawl that is wrapped over the head and completely covered the hair. The Hebrew word for veil is *tsaiyph*, which implies something that is wrapped around or over. This was also done out of respect for Isaac because a head covering represents earthly authority. In the case of a married woman it represents the authority of her husband. Rebekah's donning of the veil was an acknowledgment that she was a woman under authority.

It is possible that Rebekah had a more practical reason for donning her veil, such as wanting to hide any involuntary reactions she might have if she discovered Isaac to be ugly, although I prefer the previous explanation. Even so, her actions would still show a certain amount of respect in avoiding offense.

Eliezer, continuing his role as a type of the Holy Spirit, has delivered the Bride to the Groom, her purity represented by Rebekah's veil. The journey from Haran to

⁵⁶ *Beer Lachairoi* means "well of the Living One seeing me" according to Brown-Driver-Briggs' *Hebrew Definitions*.

Isaac represents the time between the sealing of our betrothal by the payment of the bride price and the time of our final redemption at Christ's second coming.

(See 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 for a more thorough exposition of head coverings.)

Genesis 24:67

...his mother Sarah's tent... As I noted earlier, a patriarch's home is arranged according to his wives. Each of a patriarch's wives might have had her own tent and other possessions and would pass them on to her daughters or sons if there were no daughters as in this case. This utilitarian arrangement allowed a woman to accrue possessions for her children and maintain a certain amount of security for herself. It also helped maintain boundaries and peace within a polygynous household. In a culture in which every family is potentially polygynous, structuring a house in this manner from the outset could help avoid difficulties that might arise if another woman was added later. Had Isaac brought Rebekah to live in his own tent, and later married a second wife, Rebekah would have been forced to make possibly painful adjustments. It is simply easier and kinder to structure every household as a polygynous one from the outset.

This act also appears to reinforce the idea that Abraham's significance did not end with the death of Sarah, but with the marriage of Isaac. When Rebekah took Sarah's tent, she symbolically took up Sarah's role in the redemption story, as Isaac took up Abraham's.

...she became his wife; and he loved her... Marriage must be founded on love, but you must not marry because you love. You must love because you marry. Relationships based only on infatuation (as in "falling in love") are doomed to failure. This is the second mention of love in the scriptures. The first mention is the love of a father for his son. This one is the love for a husband for his wife *after* they have been married.

Genesis 25:1-4

Then again Abraham took a wife... "Then again" does not mean "after that," but "moreover" or "by the way." The text does not make the time of his marriage to Keturah explicit. It seems to be added almost as an afterthought, although nothing in the Torah is really an "afterthought." It is obvious that Abraham was not especially motivated sexually, or if he was, that he kept his urges well under control. He spent eighty-five years with one woman, even while he could have had many. But something happened to him in his old age. His body had been reproductively dead, but God revitalized him. It is also possible that the closer one comes to God's glory and perfection, the more virile one becomes:

- God blesses his people with children.
- We image God in our procreative capacity.
- A right relationship with God is conducive to long life and good health.
- God promised Israel that obedience to him would result in fertility.

However, the events of Genesis 24 take place some forty years later, and age must eventually take us all. It seems most probable to me that Abraham married Keturah while Sarah still lived. Adam Clarke, wrote

When Abraham took Keturah we are not informed; it might have been in the lifetime of Sarah; and the original *vaiyoseph*, and he added, etc., seems to give some countenance to this opinion. Indeed it is not very likely that he had the children mentioned here after the death of Sarah; and from the circumstances of his age, feebleness, etc., at the birth of Isaac, it is still more improbable. Even at that age, forty years before the marriage of Isaac, the birth of his son is considered as not less miraculous on his part than on the part of Sarah; for the apostle expressly says, Rom 4:19, that Abraham considered not his own body Now Dead, when he was about a hundred years old, nor the Deadness of Sarah's womb; hence we learn that they were both past the procreation of children, insomuch that the birth of Isaac is ever represented as supernatural. It is therefore very improbable that he had any child after the birth of Isaac; and therefore we may well suppose that Moses had related this transaction out of its chronological order, which is not infrequent in the sacred writings, when a variety of important facts relative to the accomplishment of some grand design are thought necessary to be produced in a connected series...Perhaps we may be justified in reading the verse: "And Abraham had added, and had taken a wife (besides Hagar) whose name was Keturah," etc...⁵⁷

And John Calvin wrote,

It seems very absurd that Abraham, who is said to have been dead in his own body thirty-eight years before the decease of Sarah, should, after her death, marry another wife.... [That Abraham's marriage to Keturah was simultaneous with his marriage to Sarah may be] worthy of grave censure....Nevertheless no other, of all the conjectures which have been made, seems to me more probable.⁵⁸

All these were the children of Keturah. The absence of Ishmael from this list seems to rule out the possibility that Keturah and Hagar were the same person. Clarke continued:

⁵⁷ Adam. *Commentary*.

⁵⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries, Calvin Translation Society Edition*. Trans. John King, M.D.. (Christian Classics Ethereal Library CD-ROM, Wheaton College, 2000.)

Jonathan ben Uzziel and the Jerusalem Targum both assert that Keturah was the same as Hagar. Some rabbins, and with them Dr. Hammond, are of the same opinion; but both Hagar and Keturah are so distinguished in the Scriptures, that the opinion seems destitute of probability.

Genesis 25:6

...unto the sons of the concubines... I believe the concubines referenced here are Keturah and at least one other unnamed concubine, since Hagar had been sent away many years before. These sons had to be sent landless to the East so as not to interfere with Isaac's claim to the Promised Land. While Abraham's treatment of them seems unfair to us, it was not entirely unjust. The Promised Land was not truly Abraham's to give to whomever he chose, but had been given by God to Isaac. Also, the primary heir of a man must be the son of a free wife if such exists. The sons of concubines inherit at the good will of their father.⁵⁹ Perhaps the sons of the unnamed concubine were not listed because their families were absorbed into those of their half-brothers or into their relatives at Haran.

Genesis 25:10

...there was Abraham buried... Abraham was not buried with Keturah or Hagar, but not because they were not his legitimate wives. Knowing that marriage ends at death, Abraham made no special provisions to have the remains of all of his wives interred together with him. Hagar had been sent southward to Egypt, while Keturah and the unnamed concubine were sent eastward. All three were much younger than Abraham and Sarah, and probably outlived them. It might even be that they were actually buried in the cave of Machpelah, and the event was simply not recorded in Scripture.

Genesis 25:18

And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur... This is the best evidence that Keturah was not Hagar: while the sons of Keturah were sent east, the son of Hagar was sent south toward Egypt. Hagar found Ishmael a wife from Egypt, and his descendants settled to the south in Arabia and Sinai. The sons of Keturah settled between Canaan and Mesopotamia.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Toldot: Genesis 25:19-28:9

Genesis 25:20

And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife... Isaac was forty years old, yet he was not consulted on the choice of his bride, neither did he question the choice when it was made. Despite their age difference (twenty or more years) and their lack of personal familiarity, neither of them had any doubts, nor did they entertain thoughts of romance, dating, or “falling in love.”

Genesis 25:21

...the LORD was intreated of him... Men have real authority over their families, not merely assumed power. As Moses interceded for the nation of Israel, Isaac interceded for his wife, Rebekah. The word translated as “intreat” here is ‘*athar*,⁶⁰ and every other time that word is used, it is used to describe a request to remove some judgment for sin. (Judges 13:8 is the one exception.)⁶¹ Moses intreated God for Pharaoh and then for Israel to remove various plagues. David intreated God for himself and for Israel because of the plague brought on by his disobedience. Ezra intreated God for Israel because of their lack of faith in God’s providence. In each of these cases, the intercessor was either the one afflicted or one in authority over him. Intercession alone was probably not sufficient, however. Like Abraham and Sarah before, there might have been spiritual issues that had to be worked out before Isaac and Rebekah were ready to participate in God’s plan of redemption. We are not told what sin had brought barrenness onto Rebekah (or even if it *was* sin), only that her husband’s intercession restored her to health. Moses wrote elsewhere that disobedience to the commands of God can bring infertility, but the exact nature of Rebekah’s sin is not important. The focus here is not on infertility, but on intercession.

Genesis 25:23

...the LORD said unto her... If a prophetess is a woman through whom God speaks, then Rebekah was one of many prophetesses in Scripture. There is no authority inherent in the person of a prophet, only in the message that he or she conveys. The only restriction on a prophetess is that she prophesies with her head covered. (See 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.)

Genesis 25:27

...Jacob was a plain man... I do not know what “plain” meant to the translators of the King James Version, but in the current vernacular, “plain” is a misleading

⁶⁰ James Strong, *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Definitions*. Ed. Rick Meyers. (1890. e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

⁶¹ *King James Concordance*, Meyers.

translation of *tam*. According to *Strong's*, it means “complete” or “morally upright” and comes from another the verb, *tamam*, which means “to complete” or “to be whole.”⁶² Jacob could have been a prototype of the Renaissance man, but it seems more likely that he was an honest man. He was capable of guile, and participated in more than one deception, but his character was straight and uncomplicated.

Genesis 25:28

And Isaac loved Esau...but Rebekah loved Jacob. It was not that Isaac hated Jacob or that Rebekah hated Esau, but that they each favored one over the other. To a certain extent, when there is more than one of anything, whether they are children, wives, toys, or tools, one will always be loved more than the others. There is not necessarily anything wrong with that. Isaac apparently approved of Esau's skill in hunting, his manliness if you will, while Rebekah approved of Jacob's more broad-based focus. Of itself, this is not a terrible thing, but taken too far it can cause neglect and jealousy, as in the case of Jacob's relationships with Rachel and Leah. Perhaps Jacob learned this behavior from his parents.

Genesis 25:34

Thus Esau despised his birthright. The right of the firstborn goes to the first male born to a man unless he proves himself unworthy. Esau despised his position in the family, thinking nothing of trading it for a single meal, and proving himself again to be unworthy of the office of firstborn. The repercussions of this one event have echoed through many generations, visiting the folly of the fathers on the children and grandchildren. Esau was not an entirely dishonorable man, but his priorities were not appropriate to the firstborn. There is a time and place for the leadership of more worldly men, but the firstborn must always be a man of God first.

Genesis 26:5

Abraham obeyed my voice... Following a description of Abraham's several, long-term, polygynous marriages, God is recorded as rewarding him for his obedience to God's voice, charge, commandments, statutes, and laws. The only reasonable conclusion is that Abraham's ongoing polygyny was not contrary to any divine law. Surely we overstep our authority by applying censure where God does not.

Genesis 26:6-9

She is my sister... Isaac gave the same lie that Abraham had given, but Isaac's lie was greater. Rebekah was not his sister at all, and he should have learned

⁶² Strong, *Definitions*.

something from his parents' example.⁶³ However, the actions of Abraham and Isaac set a pattern for the later exiles and restorations of their descendants.

...Lest I die for her. Paul wrote that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Pointless sacrifice is foolish, but had Isaac demonstrated faith in God, he would have been able to overcome his fears and risk his life for Rebekah. A man should be willing to die to protect his wife.

Genesis 26:10-11

...thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. The Philistines were still not completely lost. They understood even then that there is an inexorable punishment for adultery, whether it is punished by men or not. They also understood that they would be guilty for taking another man's wife, but not for adding an additional wife to a man already married.

It is interesting that, in the ancient near east, adultery seems to have been considered a greater crime than murder, fornication, or the rape of a virgin. For the most part, they were in line with God's laws on the latter two points.

Genesis 26:34-35

Esau was forty years old... Esau was another of the family of the patriarchs who married relatively late in life. He joined Abraham and Isaac, and would later be joined by Jacob, and eventually Moses.

...he took to wife... It was not Esau's polygyny that distressed his parents, but his marriage to pagans. Rather than waiting for his father to act, Esau chose a bride for himself, and chose unwisely. He again showed himself unworthy of his birthright. Finally Isaac began to see him as he really was. If Esau had waited for his father to find him a bride, it is likely that he would have done much better and avoided much strife with his parents and brother. Marriage is not solely between a man and his wife, but involves their families as well. It is a father's responsibility to oversee the marriages of his children. The practice of a parent finding a spouse for a child is rooted in godly order, in a child's respect for his parents, and in a parent's love for his child.

I have heard it taught that Esau would have married Leah and Jacob would have married Rachel, the two families together eventually becoming Israel. I do not know if that is true, but it is not unreasonable, especially in the light of later events surrounding the divided kingdom.

Genesis 27:1-41

Bring me venison... Rebekah's tactics might not have been the most honorable, but she saw something in the characters of her sons that her husband did not. She understood that the blessing could not go to Esau, but must go to Jacob. While the man is head of his house, he is not always the wisest or most spiritual. However,

⁶³ I have heard, though not confirmed, that referring to one's wife as "sister" was a common practice. In that case, both Isaac and Abraham spoke the truth, while intending that a lie be understood.

Rebekah's actions show somewhat of a lack of faith in God's providence. I believe that she should have spoken plainly to Isaac, and maybe she did, although it is not recorded. Perhaps she knew already what Isaac would say, and avoided having to directly disobey him. Deceit hardly seems better than open rebellion, but God worked through her actions because they fit with his design. As in the case of Sarah and Abraham before, God was with Rebekah against the wishes of Isaac.

It is possible that Isaac knew Jacob when he came to him. Isaac's questioning shows that he realized something was wrong, and I doubt that he would have been fooled by goat meat or goat skins. In verse 23, Moses wrote that Isaac "discerned him not," which sounds as if he did not discover Jacob. But the Hebrew word translated as "and he discerned" is *nakar*, which does not mean "to discover" but means "to scrutinize" or "to acknowledge."⁶⁴ In other words, Isaac decided not to examine him any further. It is distinctly possible that Isaac knew exactly what was going on and only then realized the wisdom of Rebekah's desires. He decided not to expose the ruse and gave to Jacob the blessing he originally intended for Esau, as well as that intended for Jacob.

Genesis 27:46

I am weary of my life... Rebekah was exaggerating, to be sure, but she was a wise woman. From Esau's wives, she learned a lesson about being too *laissez faire* with her children's marriages, and took the opportunity of Esau's threat to be more proactive with Jacob. She knew that Isaac would choose a wife for Jacob from their own people in Haran if he had to choose at all, so she put him into a position in which he would be motivated to take action. She saved Jacob's life and his inheritance without openly opposing her husband. I am not implying that women should resort to sly manipulation of their husbands when things are not going their way. Rebekah did not use deception and manipulation so much as she used subtlety, and very few women are as wise and discerning as Rebekah. I am saying that sometimes women perceive truths that men do not, and it is not improper for a woman to respectfully help her husband to a greater understanding.

Genesis 28:1-2

...the house of Bethuel... For the third generation, God's people returned to the blood of the house of Terah. Throughout history it has been common practice to marry cousins, and it remains common in much of the world today. Some modern cultures, especially those of the United States, Canada, Australia, and other western nations, equate cousin marriage with low intelligence and birth defects. However, genetic research over the last century tells us that consanguinogamy is not nearly as hazardous as we often suppose.^{65,66} Some even claim that cousin marriages might be

⁶⁴ Strong, *Definitions*.

⁶⁵ Robert K. Elder, "Cousins battle marriage stigma." (Detroit Free Press, 12 April 2002, http://www.freep.com/features/living/cuz12_20020412.htm. Accessed 29 July 2004.

⁶⁶ George B. Louis Arner, Ph.D., *Consanguineous Marriages in the American Population* from the series Studies in History, Economics and Public Law. (Project Gutenberg, 1908, <http://www.gutenberg.net/dirs/>

more fertile than non-consanguineous marriages.⁶⁷ Scripture prohibits sexual relations with anyone more closely related than the fourth degree.⁶⁸ (See Genesis 4:17 and Leviticus 18:6.)

Genesis 28:3-4

And give thee the blessing of Abraham... This time Isaac openly acknowledged Rebekah's wisdom in the blessing of Jacob. He repeated the earlier blessing, explicitly granting Esau's birthright to Jacob, and added to it those blessings that were originally Jacob's. I have heard it taught that there were three blessings given to Jacob:

1. Material wealth and leadership. This was Esau's by birthright, but was obtained by Jacob through a veneer of deception. This blessing would later be inherited by Judah.
2. Spiritual leadership. Jacob purchased this blessing from Esau, and it would be inherited by Levi & Joseph.
3. Promise of Abraham. This third blessing was Jacob's from the beginning, and was passed on to Judah.

I do not know if this is correct, but it is reasonable.

Genesis 28:8-9

Then went Esau unto Ishmael... Esau made the mistake of most legalists: trying to do the right thing for the wrong reasons. He believed his parents were upset that he had not married family, so he took a wife from the daughters of Ishmael, his uncle. The Ishmaelites were certainly a step up from the Canaanites, but the point was not consanguinity, but character. Her name, *Mahalath*, meant "sickness,"⁶⁹ and she did nothing to improve him in Isaac's and Rebekah's sight. God continued choosing members of the house of Terah and Bethuel because of their character, which transcends both blood and religion. Instead of trying to please his parents on his own terms, Esau should have simply asked them for direction. He could have

1/2/9/5/12955/12955-h/12955-h.htm. Accessed 5 August 2004.) From Chapter VII, "Summary And Conclusion": "Consanguinity in the parents has no perceptible influence upon the number of children or upon their masculinity, and has little, if any, direct effect upon the physical or mental condition of the offspring....The relative amount of degeneracy and disease among the offspring of consanguineous marriages has been enormously exaggerated, and the danger is by no means as great as is popularly supposed. Nevertheless...it is undoubtedly true that on the average such marriages do not produce quite as healthy offspring as do non-consanguineous unions...."

⁶⁷ Anonymous, "The Facts About Cousin Marriages." (CousinCouples.com, <http://www.cousincouples.com/?page=facts>. Accessed 5 February 2009.)

⁶⁸ I do not mean "fourth cousin" or "four times removed." I refer to degrees of consanguinity. I have seen several different ways of calculating the degree of affinity, and it seems necessary to lay out exactly what I mean:

First degree	Prohibited	Parent or child
Second degree	Prohibited	Grandparent, grandchild, or full sibling
Third degree	Prohibited	Nephew, niece, or half sibling
Fourth degree	Allowed	First cousin

⁶⁹ Strong, *Definitions*.

avoided bringing yet more spiritual sickness into his household. His reliance on his own judgment without the council of his parents confirmed Rebekah's wisdom in denying him the blessing of Abraham.

Vayetzei: Genesis 28:10-32:3

Genesis 28:13-14

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth... This was very much a betrothal agreement. At a bare minimum, there are three things that a man owes to his wife: children (or at least the attempt), sustenance, and security. God promised Jacob that his seed would “be as the dust of the earth” and that he would keep him “whither thou goest.” Jacob interpreted being kept as being provided for as well as being protected. He repeated God’s promise back to him as a promise of food, clothing, and shelter.

Genesis 28:15

...I am with thee, and will keep thee... God confirmed Jacob’s blessings and promised to make him into a great nation. God would be with him as he traveled to Haran. His wife (or in this case, wives) would be chosen by God. Since God promised Jacob that his search, betrothal, marriage, progeny, and return to the land were all under divine providence, to say that Jacob’s marriages were not part of God’s plan is to call God a liar. Was God protecting and guiding him or not? It was no accident that he arrived at the well just as Rachel came out with her father’s sheep, nor was it an accident that Jacob did not recognize Leah until the morning after the wedding. After God promised to be right beside Jacob until he returned to Canaan, how is it that God would allow Jacob to be so deceived contrary to divine will without so much as a warning? The truth is that God knew exactly what was happening and maneuvered Laban and Jacob into his will. It was God’s will that Jacob marry Leah first, then Rachel, then Bilhah, and finally Zilpah.

Genesis 29:1-10

...and behold a well in the field... Amid hints of the Messiah’s first coming, his death and resurrection, and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, once more a patriarch found his bride at the well of his people.

Genesis 29:12

...she ran and told her father. When Eliezer had met Rebekah at the well, she ran first to her mother, but Rachel ran to her father. There is a reason for the difference, but I cannot guess what it is.

(See also Genesis 24:28.)

Genesis 29:17

Leah was tender eyed... The word translated “tender” is *rak*,⁷⁰ and appears to be as ambiguous in Hebrew as it is in English. It can convey weakness and frailty or softness and delicateness. Some interpret this to mean that Leah’s eyes were a flaw, being weepy or cloudy or of poor vision. Others that her eyes were a virtue, being kind or compassionate or soft.

...Rachel was beautiful and well favoured... There is no question, however, that Rachel was beautiful in everything: body, soul, and spirit. The two Hebrew words translated into the one English word “beautiful” do not refer only to a pretty face, but to a well-developed form overall. From that we can surmise that Rachel was at least fourteen years old when Jacob saw her at the well, but probably not older than her very early twenties or she would have already been promised to some other man. According to JewishEncyclopedia.com, Jose b. Halafta (*Seder ‘Olam Rabbah ii*, 2nd century AD) gave an age of fourteen years for both Rachel and Leah (twins like Jacob and Esau) when they met Jacob and twenty-one when they married him.⁷¹

Genesis 29:18-20

And Jacob loved Rachel... Nowhere does Moses or any other biblical writer explicitly state that Rachel or Leah loved Jacob, only that Jacob loved Rachel and that Leah desired him to love her as well. Perhaps one or the other or both women loved Jacob dearly, but we are not explicitly given to know how they felt. We are left to deduce their feelings from their actions: They chose Jacob over their father. They fought for his attention. They sacrificed comfort and privilege in order to give him children. Our modern sense of romance rebels against this, but it is in keeping with Paul’s instructions that husbands should love their wives while wives should obey their husbands. Men are never commanded to obey their wives, and wives are never commanded to love their husbands, although these things might sometimes be implied. Following the example of the Messiah and the Church, a husband will often do as his wife asks and a wife will show love and kindness to her husband.

I will serve thee seven years for Rachel... Jacob appears to have been about seventy-seven years old (See the table.) when he first met and fell in love with Rachel. I am certain that Jacob was not as aged as a seventy-seven year old man would be today. He lived to be 147 years old, after all. Yet the self-righteous hypocrites of today, who dress their five year old daughters like prostitutes in makeup, jewelry, and revealing clothes, would react with revulsion if a forty year old man (even a twenty year old man!) expressed an interest in a fourteen year old girl. In doing so, are they not accusing God of pedophilia? Wasn’t it God who arranged this encounter?

⁷⁰ Strong, *Definitions*.

⁷¹ Emil G. Hirsch and M. Seligsohn, “Rachel”. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>. Accessed 27 June 2006.)

Table 2: Jacob's milestones, showing his approximate age at marriage by counting backwards from a known age.

Event	Years	Jacob's Age
Jacob stood before Pharaoh		130
Prior years of famine	2	128
Years of Plenty	7	121
Birth of Joseph (Or Joseph's age when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream)	30	91
Years served for Rachel	7	84
Years served for Leah	7	77

I am not promoting relationships between teenaged girls and older men. (There is more to maturity than biology.) I am refuting the dogmatic position of modern western Christians against all marriage between persons with significant age differences.

Genesis 29:21

Give me my wife... Jacob already viewed Rachel as his wife, although he had not yet been with her. This is consistent with the Biblical attitude toward betrothal, in which the marriage covenant has been made, but has not yet been sealed or fulfilled.

Genesis 29:23

...he took Leah his daughter... It appears that this maneuver was Laban's idea, but Jewish tradition says that Rachel and Leah willingly cooperated. Jacob and Rachel had devised a secret sign for just this situation, so that Jacob would not be fooled. Rachel, knowing that Leah might never be able to marry and have a family, had compassion on her and revealed the secret sign to her. Even so, it seems difficult to believe that Jacob could make such a mistake, especially after having lived with both of these women for seven years. But there are several other factors to consider:

1. There was almost certainly a substantial amount of alcohol consumed during the celebrations.
2. Rachel and Leah probably both wore veils, even in public, and which they might not have removed even on their wedding night until after the last lamp had been put out.
3. The interior of an animal skin tent at night can be exceptionally dark.
4. Jewish tradition says that Rachel and Leah were twins and so could have been very similar in height, weight, and build.
5. God had promised to look after Jacob until he returned to Canaan, and Jacob's blindness could have been induced by God to ensure the execution of a divine plan.

In support of the fourth and fifth items above, there is another tradition that says Esau should have married Leah while Jacob should have married Rachel. Since Jacob received Esau's blessing from Isaac, he also had to be the father of all twelve of the tribes of Israel. Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah had been marked as the mothers of the nation of Israel, and no other woman would do. Therefore Jacob had to marry all four of them, and God made sure that it happened.

But why did Rachel and Leah go along with this idea? I have heard some women say that they would rather be the third or fourth wife of King David than the first wife of Nabal. The rabbis say that Jacob married so late in life because he had been studying under Shem, the son of Noah. I do not know if that is true, but it would certainly make Jacob a more attractive prospect than most other men. Having spent the last seven years in such close proximity to Jacob, Leah might have already harbored a strong attraction to him. She was also a godly woman and probably very respectful of her father's wishes, however conniving he might be.

Rachel was more likely than Leah to find another husband if Jacob rejected her and could have felt some compassion toward her sister in her unfortunate situation. She was also a godly woman and probably experienced a great deal of conflict in her loyalties, as she was not yet fully married to Jacob.

Genesis 29:24

...**Zilpah his maid for an handmaid.** Some slave girls were born into that state. Zilpah was a maidservant of Laban, but not a concubine. According to John Gill,⁷² the Targum of Jonathan calls her the daughter of Laban by a concubine.⁷³

When a wealthy man gave away one of his daughters in marriage he would often give her one or more handmaids, whether purchased specifically for this purpose or born in his house. A woman's handmaid was her personal servant, but was also a sort of insurance policy against infertility. If she proved unable to bear children, then she could give her handmaid to her husband and any resulting children would be considered a part of her household.

Genesis 29:28

And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week... An agreement made under duress or in bad faith is normally not considered valid. Why then did Jacob accept this treachery with such little fuss? Why did he not immediately send Leah back to her father and demand Rachel as his rightful wife? I see two possible reasons:

1. Jacob was a good man at heart, and had compassion on Leah. He knew that she had been badly used in this affair, and that she would have an even harder time finding a husband after it. Not only was she no longer a virgin, but she had

⁷² Dr. John Gill, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

⁷³ Slave girls coming into a house from outside appear to have been assigned one of three positions:

1. Concubine to either the father of the house or one of his sons.
2. Concubine or wife to a male servant.
3. Handmaid to a woman of the house.

participated in a serious deception against the man she would call husband. What other man would willingly marry her?

2. Jacob recognized God's hand in these events, and though he was angry, he realized that he had brought the situation on himself by his treatment of Esau and Isaac.

I do not accept the proposition that Jacob was married to Leah by virtue of mere sexual relations. All covenants are sealed by blood, but much blood has been shed without establishing a covenant.

Genesis 29:30

...yet another seven years. The betrothal arrangement with Laban was that Jacob would work seven years for each of his daughters. Without a reciprocal dowry, both Rachel and Leah would have been made concubines, as they both bitterly lamented later. Fortunately for them, God extracted their dowry against Laban's will from the herds which Jacob watched over. God's plan required that Judah, Levi, and Joseph inherit different aspects of the firstborn blessing, therefore I believe that these three had to be born to a free woman.

Genesis 29:31

...but Rachel was barren. At first, this story might seem like a good argument against polygyny, but it is actually an example of one of the patriarchal principles that makes polygyny possible. Jacob did not sin by marrying two women. He sinned by treating Leah spitefully. Yes, Leah (with Rachel's and Laban's help it might be added) deceived Jacob, but he is ultimately responsible for the state of his own house, and it suffered for his selfishness. Later, he would even go so far as to blame God for Rachel's barrenness. God caused Rachel to be barren, but He did so in response to Jacob and Rachel.

As fathers we are responsible for our families in much the same way that a military commander is in charge of his men. We are in command of the actions of our wives and children, but we are also responsible for them. God has given us authority over our families, but they are not ours. They still belong to God. We must protect them and direct them as God directs us. They will suffer if we misdirect, but we are ultimately responsible for their well being as much as our own. Who is to blame if a military unit fails in battle? Do we blame the soldiers? Certainly they deserve the blame for their individual actions, however the commander justly receives the blame for not properly preparing and leading them.

In the end it must also be remembered that God later re-opened Rachel's womb. If the closing of her womb was a sign of God's judgment, then its re-opening was a sign of God's blessing. Since Jacob's state of marriage never changed, then the cause of the curse could never have been his polygyny.

Genesis 29:32

Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction. Both women understood the cause of their respective situations. This statement, along with similar statements made at the births of Simeon and Levi, shows that she knew God blessed her with children because Jacob favored Rachel.

...now therefore my husband will love me. Leah desired the one thing that she did not have and that Rachel did: the love of Jacob. Meanwhile Rachel desired the one thing that Leah had and she did not: Jacob's children. Which of the two is more valuable to a godly woman depends on which one she does not have. Both are important for a happy and fulfilling marriage.

Genesis 30:1

...Rachel envied her sister... God's law requires a certain minimum level of favor from a husband to each of his wives. Jacob kept the letter of that law faithfully, but he appears to have harbored a resentment of Leah in his heart. Years later, he still felt her deception and gave most of his affection to Rachel. God indirectly evened the scales by withholding his blessing from Rachel, not because she shared a husband, but because Jacob treated Leah unfairly. Rachel's response to this was to envy her sister. She begged Jacob to give her children, but her bitterness only made the problem worse. The scientific mind might scoff, saying that Jacob and Rachel were powerless over Rachel's infertility. Jacob agreed and placed all of the blame on God. But, while Rachel's attitude and method might have been less than perfect, her conclusion was more correct. Her infertility really was partly Jacob's fault. She apparently desired children even more than the affection of her husband.

I am not convinced that all jealousy in situations such as Rachel's is completely unrighteous. Paul wrote that God bestowed blessings on the Gentiles in order to provoke the Jews to jealousy. Rachel should not have allowed her jealousy to become a desire to take blessings away from Leah, but only to obtain additional blessings for herself. Eventually she would realize this herself and reconcile with her sister.

Genesis 30:2

Am I in God's stead? The commentators seem to be unanimous in agreeing with Jacob that he had no power over Rachel's barrenness, but they are incorrect. God made Rachel barren, but he did so partly in response to Jacob's actions and state of heart. As in the houses of Pharaoh and the Philistine's kings, through the spiritual realm, the actions of a patriarch have profound effects upon the fertility of his house.

Genesis 30:3

...that I may also have children by her. Obviously Rachel was not concerned about sharing her husband's affections with other women. Without children she could not fully fill her role as Jacob's wife. So that she could bring children into

Jacob's house she gave him another wife. Being Rachel's slave, Bilhah remained under authority and any children she bore would belong in that manner to Rachel.

Genesis 30:5

And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. If Rachel's barrenness was a punishment for her and Jacob's polygyny, then God would not have given children to both Bilhah and Zilpah. Not only did Rachel not repent, but she compounded the supposed offense by pushing Jacob into the worst sort of polygyny: concubinage. Yet Bilhah conceived and bare Jacob a son. Polygyny simply cannot be condemned based on mere inference. The evidence is far too contradictory to enable an argument that is both cohesive and honest.

Genesis 30:6

God hath judged me... Rachel saw the birth of Dan as a vindication of her attitude toward her sister, but her womb remained closed because of her bitterness and Jacob's favoritism. Dan was born into her house, but not through her womb.

Genesis 30:8

...I have wrestled with my sister... Rachel saw the birth of Naphtali as a sort of victory over her sister, but her struggle was really only with herself. The root of Rachel's barrenness was her own bitterness. This kind of rivalry is certainly not unique to polygynous households. A woman must compete for her husband's affection with family, hobbies, work, ministry, and even her own children. Children compete with each other for their parents' attentions. If potential jealousy is enough to prohibit a relationship, then we should limit all parents to one child per household because favoritism and rivalry is inevitable.⁷⁴ We do not do that because those things are not necessarily bad. They can be managed to the benefit of all, assuming honorable intentions on all parts. I do not say this to excuse Jacob and his wives. They made mistakes and sometimes lost control of their rivalries.

Marriage is not a contest. It is a one-on-one relationship, a covenant between two people with God as witness and judge. Even in a polygynous household, each marriage is separate and distinct from all of the others. Each wife has her own relationship with her husband and there must be an aspect of that relationship that is free from outside influences. Her relationship with her husband must not depend on her or his relationships with his other wives. Just as we are all one body in Messiah, yet our salvation, our marriage to him, is completely independent of anyone else's salvation. This is the essence of the parable of the workers who were all paid the same regardless of the number of hours worked. What transpires between a husband and wife is nobody's business but theirs, and so long as the rights of every wife are met fairly, then there is no cause for jealousy or complaint.

⁷⁴ God certainly has his favorites: Abraham, Moses, David, and others.

To further the parallel between marriage and our individual salvation: Salvation through Messiah is available to all regardless of gender or nationality (1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28), however spiritual gifts are bestowed on whom God wills (1 Corinthians 12). There is no cause for one member of his body to be jealous of another, for we have been given what he knows we need and are capable of managing. What point could there be in one believer's bitterness over the greater gift given to another? As Paul wrote, "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?" Prove first the small trust that God gives to you, and he will give you even more (Matthew 25:21).

Genesis 30:9

...she took Zilpah her maid... Leah still did not have Jacob's affections but thought that she might win them by giving him even more children. This too, was part of God's plan.

...and gave her to Jacob to wife. A concubine is just as much a wife as a free wife. The only difference is that the former is also a slave while the latter is free.

Genesis 30:10

And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. Once again, the polygyny in Jacob's house is increased with no sign of disapprobation from God and no decrease in fertility among any of these women. The naming of Gad seems to be in response to the naming of Naphtali. Rachel said that she has wrestled with her sister, while Leah claimed final victory in the contest as if she were saying, "You won that round, but reinforcements are coming."

Genesis 30:14

...thou hast taken my husband? Rachel already had Jacob's affections, and now she was attempting to use herbs to augment her prayers for children. Leah's natural and understandable reaction was of despair. Leah's great contribution to Jacob's family up to this time was her children. If Rachel were to give Jacob children of her own, then Leah's place of honor would be jeopardized in her own eyes. The truth is that the special place of all mothers, like love, does not diminish in the sharing. God's love for each of us is not diminished in the least by the addition of millions more to his family. Likewise, if Rachel had born twenty children, that would not have necessarily diminished any love that Jacob might have for Leah.

...he shall lie with thee to night... Rachel's response is to offer a compromise of good faith. She did not want to take Jacob away from Leah, but only wanted children of her own. Bilhah's children were a blessing, but did not completely make up for her own barrenness. By offering to trade places with Leah for that night, Rachel was saying that she did not begrudge Leah her own children, but wanted some for herself as well.

Genesis 30:17

And God harkened unto Leah... God blessed Leah for her willingness to allow Rachel the same honor that she enjoyed by giving her even greater honor.

Genesis 30:18

...because I have given my maiden to my husband. Because the story of the mandrakes immediately precedes God's harkening unto Leah, it seems that he answered her prayers because of the mandrakes, and not simply through them. But if that is true, then why did Leah say it was because she had given her maiden to her husband? I see three possible interpretations:

1. God heard Leah's prayers and gave her the means to purchase that night with Jacob because Leah had given Zilpah to him. This interpretation is straightforward, but I see no reason why God would be constrained to work through Leah's hire. Surely she had been with Jacob many times since giving him Zilpah. Why would God require her to hire Jacob instead of just blessing her with a child like he had at other times?

2. God honored Leah's bargain with Rachel, whom Leah now thought of as another slave girl whom she had given to Jacob. In other words, Leah was insulting Rachel by calling her "my maiden." This interpretation seems highly unlikely. I doubt that she would believe such an attitude worthy of divine reward.

3. God honored Leah's bargain with Rachel because when Rachel was at Leah's mercy, she showed the same compassion that Rachel had once shown to her. Rachel had Jacob's love, but wanted his children. Leah had Jacob's children, but wanted his love. Rachel offered Jacob to Leah, symbolized by that hired night, and Leah offered children to Rachel, symbolized by the mandrakes. Of course, neither of them could actually give those things to the other, but God honored the intent of their hearts by granting the reality of the tokens. By willingly surrendering the only thing that they each had, they were both blessed even more. I suspect that after that day Leah had a place in Jacob's heart, and we know that Rachel bore two sons. The exchange of fertility for affection symbolized forgiveness between the two sisters and the healing of Jacob's family. This third interpretation, while not obvious in the plain reading, makes a great deal of sense to me, and it does not contradict the surface meaning given in interpretation one.

Most commentators call Leah's statement boastful,⁷⁵ preposterous,⁷⁶ or abusive of God's mercy,⁷⁷ but no matter what interpretation one applies to Leah's statement, she believed that God rewarded her for encouraging Jacob's polygyny. The Scriptures say nothing to the contrary, but continue to speak of God's blessing on her life. So who are we to believe? It appears to me that Leah and Rachel were rewarded for repenting of jealousy and forgiving the other, while remaining in their respective polygynous marriages with Jacob.

⁷⁵ *Geneva Bible Translation Notes*. (1599. e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

⁷⁶ Gill, *Exposition*

⁷⁷ Henry, *Concise*

Genesis 30:20

God hath endued me with a good dowry. A dowry is wealth brought into a marriage by the wife and belonging to her, but available for use by the husband. Other cultures certainly used the dowry differently, but this seems to be the case among the Hebrews. Children are indeed a form and a source of wealth. They are joy and strength in their youth and security in their maturity. A woman with many children should have no fear of the future. Leah's future was now secure because she had both children and the love of her husband.

Genesis 30:21

And afterwards she bare a daughter... Dinah was probably not Leah's only daughter. The births of daughters were not normally recorded because nationality is determined patrilineally, not because daughters are less loved or less important. Dinah's birth and name are recorded here because of later events.

Genesis 30:22

And God remembered Rachel... Rachel's womb was opened by the forgiveness and healing between her and her sister.

Genesis 30:23

God hath taken away my reproach. The Hebrew word used for reproach, *kherpah*, is used in the sense of something shameful put upon one as a rebuke or as the result of some inappropriate behavior.⁷⁸ Infertility, like blindness, is not always the result of some wrongdoing, but in this case it was. The conception and birth of Joseph was a sign of God's forgiveness and blessing, while Jacob's polygyny continued without comment.

Genesis 30:27-32

Thou shalt not give me any thing. Laban had received for his two daughters a bride price far greater than he had expected. Instead of mere labor, he received great wealth. He wished to keep Jacob in his service, anticipating even greater rewards. But God was working behind the scenes to ensure a fair exchange and a clear line of inheritance through Judah and Joseph. Jacob made it clear that anything he would receive from this deal would be at the hand of God and not Laban, but the large flocks he would accrue over the next seven years would serve as Leah's and Rachel's material dowry. To preserve the promise of Abraham, God ensured they were completely free wives and not concubines.

⁷⁸ *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definitions*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

Genesis 30:37

...rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree... These details must have been recorded for good reason, and it was not as advice to sheep breeders. There must be a deeper meaning to Jacob's selection and manipulation of the rods. Here are two pieces of data that might or might not be related:

1. The poplar and chestnut are known have been used in pagan worship ceremonies. The poplar is mentioned in Hosea 4:13 as a favored shade tree for certain rituals, and, according to Adam Clarke, the Greeks used the chestnut tree in a similar fashion.⁷⁹

2. According to some commentators as well as the *Latin Vulgate* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions*, the word used here for hazel, *luz*, should be translated as "almond." Aaron carried a staff of almond, and it blossomed and bore fruit as proof of God's anointing (Numbers 17:8). It is the same name as the town near where God appeared to Jacob in a dream and bestowed on him Abraham's covenant and a promise to watch over him during his travels and stay at Haran (Genesis 28:11-22). Jacob renamed the place of his dream to Bethel or Elbethel, meaning the house of God or the God of the house of God.

The three rods might represent the three patriarchs who took their brides from Haran. The mottled sheep that Laban separated out for Jacob might be the four matriarchs of Israel. The mottled sheep that were produced from looking at the rods or the other sheep might be the natural people of Israel or the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt or those gentiles who have been brought to belief and joined to Israel through the example of the patriarchs and the Hebrew scriptures or all three (Isaiah 56:3-7).

Genesis 31:3

Return unto the land of thy fathers... The final arrangements for the marriage covenant between God and Jacob had been completed, the dowry and bride price exchanged. It was time for God to take Jacob back to his own land. So every bride leaves her people and land to join with her husband's.

Genesis 31:14

Is there yet any portion or inheritance... Evidently, there had been dowries set aside for Leah and Rachel, but Laban had squandered them. A daughter inherited alongside her brothers, but her inheritance was given as a dowry at the time of her marriage rather than at the time of her father's death.

Genesis 31:15-16

...he hath sold us... Jacob had paid the agreed upon bride price, but Laban had not paid the dowry, and so they would have been mere concubines if not for divine intervention.

⁷⁹ Clarke, *Commentary*

...the riches that God hath taken from our father, that is ours... God extracted Leah's and Rachel's dowries from Laban without his cooperation.

Genesis 31:43

...all that thou seest is mine... Laban thought to appeal to Jacob's sense of gratitude by claiming that everything of Jacob's was had only by his good will. Of course, the exact opposite is true. Everything of Jacob's was taken from Laban despite his best efforts to keep from treating Jacob fairly.

Genesis 31:50

If thou shalt afflict my daughters... The obvious interpretation is that Laban was talking about some kind of active abuse, as in beating or mocking, but the Talmud says that it means that Jacob was not to deprive Rachel and Leah of sexual relations.⁸⁰ I do not know if that is correct, but it fits with the other half of Laban's demand.

...if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters... The Hebrew word translated as "beside" does not necessarily mean "in addition to." It is *al*, which, according to *Strong's* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs*, also means "against" or "above." I think that Laban was forbidding the same thing that Yeshua forbade in Matthew 5:32, 19:9, etc., namely Jacob replacing his daughters in favor of someone else. I do not believe that Laban was demanding that Jacob never marry another woman in addition to Laban's daughters, especially since Jacob had already married two additional women. Even if that was not what Laban meant, he had already established his tendency to lay claim to more than he had a right.

⁸⁰ *Talmud, Book 3*. Rodkinson, 117-118.

Vayishlach: Genesis 32:4-36:43

Genesis 32:7-8

...he divided the people...and the flocks... Jacob divided his camp into two companies. In one company went all of his livestock, and in the other went his family and other possessions. (We can know the general scheme of division because verses 22 and 23 say that all four women and eleven sons were still with him after he had sent off his livestock.) Jacob obviously did not consider his wives and children to be mere property. He was willing to sacrifice all his wealth before sacrificing even one of the concubines. Later he would also divide his family into separate parties.

Genesis 33:13-14

...as the children be able to endure... It is important for a man to remember not to drive his family harder than they are able to withstand. Change is frequently necessary, especially when you are leading your family out of worldliness, but be gentle. You want to lead them forward, not to drive them away altogether.

Genesis 34:1

...to see the daughters of the land. Dinah followed in the footsteps of Lot's daughters in becoming unequally yoked with unbelievers. She acted foolishly in seeking fulfillment in social interaction with pagans and made herself more vulnerable than necessary.

Genesis 34:2

...he took her... Shechem kidnapped Dinah and had no intention of freeing her. By itself, the rape of an unbetrothed girl is not a capital offense, however kidnapping is.

Genesis 34:3

And his soul clave unto Dinah...and he loved the damsel... With words worthy of the most tawdry romance novels, Dinah's honor fell to a jackal. He "loved the damsel" passionately, yet loved her really not at all. The romance of Shechem and Johanna Lindsey is pornography for women, and can be at least as damaging as the graphic pornography preferred by men.

Genesis 34:9-10

And ye shall dwell with us... Hamor's purpose was to assimilate the Israelites, not just to get a bride for his son. Paul instructed believers not to leave the spouses

that they had before their conversion, but also not to deliberately marry an unbeliever after their conversion. Assimilation would be the eventual result.

Genesis 34:13-17

And the sons of Jacob...answered deceitfully... They had no intention of allowing Shechem to keep Dinah. Shechem had already committed a capital offense without remorse, and no outward token of conversion could erase what was in his heart. Do not think that mere baptism or church membership is sufficient qualification for a potential spouse. You cannot judge a person's fundamental character by their latest profession of faith. Ostensibly, they were accepting Hamor's offer with the stipulation that the people of Shalem assimilate with Israel instead of the other way around. Hamor thought the wealth he could obtain from Israel would more than make up for the minor loss of face he would suffer in giving them the immediate upper hand. There is nothing wrong with marrying into wealth, but material gain must never compromise one's spiritual wellbeing.

Genesis 34:19

...he was more honorable than all the house of his father. The people of Shalem went along with this scheme for greed and because they had great respect for Shechem. But if Shechem, the man-stealer and rapist, was the most honorable man in his father's house, it is difficult to feel any sympathy for them in their violent end. Even if Shechem had been a truly honorable man, it would still be important to evaluate the character of his family before agreeing to a marriage, especially with your daughter. A wise woman from a foolish house may be a worthwhile addition to your own house, but giving your daughter to even a wise man in a foolish house will still surround her with foolishness.

Genesis 34:25

...and slew all the males. Like Gibeah many years later, the men of Shalem brought guilt upon themselves for their active participation in the capital offense of Shechem. Any people who would protect the perpetrators of such crimes become just as criminal themselves. If the crime had only been rape (as terrible as it is), then taking back Dinah and looting a sizeable bride price would have been sufficient. The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* claims that previous inhabitants of the city had conspired to kidnap and rape Sarah and Rebekah as well, so that their entire culture, like that of Sodom, was given over to violence and sexual immorality, but he might have been confusing the events at Gerar.⁸¹ While I believe that the Shalemites probably deserved their punishment, Levi and Simeon acted rashly. Unlike the

⁸¹ "The Testament of Levi," *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Trans. R. H. Charles (Oxford Press, as reproduced by Good News, <http://www.goodnewsinc.net/othbooks/patrarch.html>. Accessed 5 February 2009.)

inhabitants of Gibeah, the Shalemites were given no chance to surrender the guilty party.

Genesis 34:27

...because they had defiled their sister. The spoiling of Shalem was justified if the murder of its inhabitants was not. God's law demands that the rapist of an unbetrothed woman must pay her bride price whether or not her father allows their marriage. Since the entire city was complicit in Shechem's crime, the entire city was made to pay the penalty.

Genesis 34:29

...their wives took they captive... The children would become slaves and the women would become concubines or slaves or set free after a period of mourning.

(See also Deuteronomy 21:10-14.)

Genesis 34:30

Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land... Perhaps Jacob should not have worried so much about the opinions of Canaanites and Perizzites. Simeon and Levi acted to murder without consulting their father because they probably knew what he would have said. Although they were second and third in line for inheriting as the firstborn, they proved themselves unworthy of that role. The violent nature of their characters was unsuitable to the ruler of a nation or even a clan.

Genesis 35:2

Put away the strange gods from among you... This was not Jacob's conversion to faith in God, but repentance from a particular sin that he had allowed to continue in his house. Several prior instances of angelic visitations and conversations with God provide ample evidence that Jacob was a believer all the time he was siring children by four different women.

Genesis 35:4

...all their earrings which were in their ears...

These earrings (or nose rings) symbolized devotion to a particular deity or served as talismans.

Genesis 35:11

Be fruitful and multiply... The command to have children is repeated here to Jacob and to the nation of Israel. All of the people of the earth are to be fruitful, but even more so the congregation of God. Believers have a special duty to God, to the Earth, and to the human race to out-reproduce unbelievers.

Genesis 35:19

And Rachel died... When Laban pursued and caught Jacob leaving with his daughters, he accused Jacob of stealing his idols. Jacob denied it and pronounced death on the guilty party. Although Rachel was not found out at that time, Jacob's curse remained in effect. Words, especially the words of a patriarch, have real power over events in the world. Those in positions of authority must take extra care when speaking over their charges.

Genesis 35:22

...Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine... Some have said that Rachel's death represented the end of Jacob's polygyny, but they are only reading their own prejudices into the Scriptures. He had no more children, but Bilhah remained his concubine long after Rachel's death. There is no evidence that he put away Bilhah, Zilpah, or Leah.

Reuben paid for this mistake by losing his place as the firstborn of Israel, which punishment was very light compared to what Jacob could have justly done. The *Talmud* says that Reuben did not actually commit adultery against Jacob, but that he did something to interfere with Jacob's and Bilhah's relationship that was tantamount to adultery.⁸² However, the plain language of Scripture seems to leave little room for speculation.

Genesis 36:2

And Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan... Esau seems to have been a kindred spirit to Lamech, and he apparently married the two Canaanite women for the same reasons Lamech married his wives: wealth and power. His first wife, Adah, even bares the same name as one of Lamech's wives. Her name means "ornament,"⁸³ and I believe it refers to the wealth of her father. This interpretation is reinforced by the name of Adah's son, Eliphaz, which means "god of gold."⁸⁴ His second wife's name was Aholibamah, which means "tent of the high place"⁸⁵ and would seem to indicate authority. Esau married Adah for wealth and Aholibamah for power.

(See also Genesis 4:19-24.)

Genesis 36:3

And Bashemath Ishmael's daughter... When Esau realized how displeased his parents were with his choice of brides, he married Bashemath, whose name means "fragrance."⁸⁶ By her he hoped to remove the stench he had become to his parents.

⁸² "Tract Sabbath," *Talmud, Book I*. Rodkinson. 101-102.

⁸³ Strong, *Definitions*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

⁸⁵ Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Definitions*.

⁸⁶ Strong, *Definitions*

Genesis 36:10

...Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau... God of gold, the son of ornamentation.

Genesis 36:14

...Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon... The names of women are prominent throughout the genealogy of Esau. Their names are almost certainly important, but I believe this illustrates another problem with Canaanite culture. Although Esau was a Semite, he and his sons married Canaanites. At least during the time of Esau, the Canaanites appear to have been matriarchal. I do not think it is entirely coincidental that the Canaanites were also the recipients of Noah's curse against Ham nor that they were among the most offensive people on earth in the manner of their pagan worship.

Vayeshev: Genesis 37-40

Genesis 37:2

...Bilhah...and Zilpah, his father's wives. Jacob's concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, were also fully his wives. Of course, the Hebrew word used here can also simply mean "woman." Moses may have been just calling Bilhah and Zilpah Jacob's women, but it is the same word used in other passages to refer to Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Keturah, Rachel, Leah, and all of the other wives of the Bible. A concubine was not just a spare sex partner, but had rights and responsibilities in her husband's house.

Genesis 37:3

...the son of his old age... How many times have you heard a mother refer to her youngest child, already grown, as her baby? Fathers sometimes do the same. We do not blame them, but accept this as normal. Unfortunately, such favoritism can be the cause (or at least the excuse) of resentment and even hatred. In the Bible, that resentment sometimes turned to murder. Nobody says that, because the youngest is often favored, therefore no one should have more than one child. Why then do we say the same thing about wives? No child should be heavily favored over his siblings and no wife should be heavily favored over her sister wives, but just because it happens does not mean that no one should be allowed to have more than one child or that no man should be allowed to have more than one wife.

...and he made him a coat of many colours. Although Moses did not tell us so, I am certain that this garment was not simply a coat, but a mantle like Elijah's, a badge of office and an emblem of divinely delegated authority. I am also certain that it was made in exactly twelve colors, one for each of the tribes of Israel over which Joseph would be given authority. Recall that the High Priest's breastplate, as well as the foundations and the gates of the New Jerusalem, contained twelve precious stones of twelve different colors explicitly representing the twelve tribes. It was an independent confirmation of the prophecy which Joseph was soon to receive in a dream.

Genesis 37:9

...the sun and the moon... The moon was created to rule the night skies. A woman's authority in her home is necessarily less than her husband's but is still substantial.

Genesis 37:10

...I and thy mother and thy brethren... Joseph didn't dream about Leah or his father's other wives. The only family members represented in his dream were those with a blood relationship. One wife should not be treated as if she is the mother of another wife's children, except if the later is the servant of the former, or except so

far as the former fills a particular functional role such as medical provider or school teacher. There is no inherent authority relationship between one wife and another wife's children.

Genesis 38:2

...a daughter of a certain Canaanite... Mixing believers and unbelievers in marriage is always a bad idea. Most of the problems that people see in Biblical stories of polygynous families are not due to polygyny, but to paganism and other actual sins. Judah married a Canaanite woman, David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and Solomon married a host of pagan women. Shuah means "wealth."⁸⁷ I believe this indicates that Judah was motivated by potential monetary gain and may have been giving in to pressure to assimilate into the Canaanite culture. Like Lamech and Esau before him, Judah married for earthly gain but lost much more.

Genesis 38:6

And Judah took a wife for Er... In keeping with the example set by God in the Garden, Er was not given to a woman, but the woman was given to Er. In contrast to Shuah, whose attractive characteristic was wealth, Tamar's name means "palm tree."⁸⁸ I believe that her name is given so that we will know that she was generally righteous or upright as a palm tree.

Genesis 38:8

Go in unto thy brother's wife... The Levirate law, like the rest of God's laws, predates the tablets given at Sinai. The law existed before it was ever expressed in human tongue, and remains unchanged today. It might not be right to force a widow to marry against her will, but neither is it right to neglect your duty to her, your brother, your family, and God.

Genesis 38:10

...the thing which he did... Onan was not killed for the practice which has inherited his name. He was killed because he hated his brother enough to deny him an heir. This is the value that God places on inheritance. Our arrogance in thinking that we have outgrown God's laws like so much vestigial anatomy seriously endangers both our spiritual and physical health.

Genesis 38:11

...lest peradventure he die also. Judah assumed wrongly that the fault was with Tamar, and he had no intention of marrying her to his youngest son. He was being unjust to Tamar, however because the fault was first with his sons, and second with

⁸⁷ Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Definitions*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

himself. His sons were wicked at heart—most likely an inheritance from their Canaanite mother.

Genesis 38:15

...she had covered her face. Judah did not mistake her for a prostitute because she wore a veil, but because she was an unknown woman loitering on the street. Her veil only disguised her identity.

Genesis 38:18

Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. This was outrageous security for a mere goat. God influenced Judah to agree to give these things to a disreputable stranger so that we could benefit from a meaning that Judah certainly did not understand:

- **The signet ring** – The possession of another’s signet is the possession of that person’s authority. Jezebel ruled Israel through possession of Ahab’s signet. God chose Zerubbabel to lead Judah, saying that he would be like God’s own signet. The wrong that Judah had done to Tamar gave her a legitimate claim over his resources. (See also 1 Kings 21:8 and Haggai 2:23.)
- **The bracelets** – “Bracelets” seems like a poor translation in modern English. This was actually a cord of some kind. The same word, *patiyl*, is used to describe the blue cords used to tie together parts of the high priest’s uniform, and also to describe the single blue thread of the *tzitzit*.⁸⁹ I suspect that these cords of Judah were meant to point to the latter. A man’s *tzitziyot* are a reminder of God’s laws and are emblematic of the authority which God has delegated to him, just as his signet is a sign of his own delegated authority. When a man covers a woman with his *tzitziyot*, he is taking her under his authority and protection. Ruth asked Boaz to cover her with his *tzitziyot* when she asked him to fulfill the levirate for her. By demanding Judah’s “bracelets,” Tamar was claiming her right to the levirate that Judah attempted to deny her. (See also Numbers 15:38-41 and Ruth 3:9.)
- **The staff** – The staff is also a symbol of authority. The Hebrew letter, *lamed*, is in the shape of a shepherd’s crook and symbolizes teaching or yoking. In taking his staff, Tamar declared Judah unfit to rule his family. (See also Genesis 2:24.)

Genesis 38:24

...let her be burnt. The only crime for which the Torah prescribes burning is the fornication of the daughter of a priest. The stories of Sarah and Abimelech, Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the implications of Genesis 38:26 indicate that God’s law

⁸⁹ *Concordance*. Meyers.

was in effect for all peoples at all times. It seems likely that Tamar, like the wives of Joseph and Moses, was the daughter of a priest.

Genesis 38:25

...whose are these? God's law requires the death of both parties involved in the act of adultery. By presenting these items before her accusers, she linked her own life to Judah's. If he insisted on her execution, then his own life would have been forfeit as well.

Genesis 38:26

She hath been more righteous than I... Although Tamar sinned in seducing Judah, her sin of fornication was less than Judah's sins of marrying a Canaanite woman, despising the levirate, and falsely accusing Tamar. His words also foreshadowed those of Yeshua when he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Judah had no right to accuse Tamar of fornication when he was guilty in the very same instance. He had no right to accuse Tamar of being at fault in the death of his sons, when the actual cause was his own marriage.

And he knew her again no more. Having once been the wife of two of his sons, it was not proper that Tamar should be Judah's wife. But having once been with Judah, she could not be Shelah's wife, either.

Genesis 38:27-30

...behold, twins were in her womb. There is an interesting parallel between the marriages of Rachel and Leah and the births of Zarah and Pharez. Rachel was betrothed first, but Leah broke through to marry first. Zarah put his hand out first, but Pharez broke through to be born first. This gives some support to the Jewish tradition that Rachel and Leah were also twins. The recurrent struggles between twins in Genesis are a pattern of the relationship between Israel and Judah.

Genesis 39:4

All that he had he put into his hand. Judah gave up his signet easily for the sake of momentary pleasure. Joseph resisted temptation, sacrificing his place in Potiphar's house, and later Pharaoh gave him an even greater signet. I am reminded of Yeshua's parable of the talents.

Genesis 39:9

...because thou art his wife. Since Potiphar had withheld nothing and no one else from Joseph's authority, this woman must have been his only wife. He is one of the few verifiably monogamous men in the Bible, yet his family life was obviously not significantly happier than that of the polygynous patriarchs. The obvious counter is that Potiphar was not a believer, and as such, his monogamous marriage was little better in its foundation than the polygynous marriage of a believer. Perhaps so, but it

does not convince me that polygyny must therefore always be wrong or even that monogamy is always to be preferred.

Genesis 39:11

...there was none of the men of the house there within. While the situation was not completely under Joseph's control, it left him open to the woman's advances. The children's song comes to mind: "Oh! Be careful little feet where you go..." Simple, perhaps, but still sound advice.

Genesis 39:12

...and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. Joseph responded appropriately. It is better to run and be made to answer a false accusation than to give in to sin and perhaps escape unpunished.

Genesis 39:21

But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy... Joseph resisted sin and temporarily suffered much, but God rewards obedience. Eventually Joseph ruled a powerful kingdom and married a princess. Once again, contrast this with Judah, who gave into temporary sin, and suffered much permanent damage, apparently spending the rest of his life alone.

Mikeitz: Genesis 41:1-44:17

Genesis 41:45

...Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. I find it interesting that Moses makes no comment concerning Joseph's marriage to the daughter of a foreign priest. Joseph obviously had a very close relationship with God, which never seriously faltered. His two children, Ephraim and Manasseh were later counted among the tribes of Israel rather than as members of a tribe of Joseph. Although there is no evidence, either way, I like to believe that Asenath left the religion of her father for that of her husband.

In discussing this issue in correspondence with Tom Shipley, he pointed out that although Joseph was second only to Pharaoh, he was still not a free man. As an absolute monarch, Pharaoh had authority over the daughter of Potipherah since she was an Egyptian, and he had authority over Joseph, since he was a slave. The two had very little to say in the matter.

Genesis 42:38

My son shall not go down with you... Jacob spoke as if Joseph and Benjamin were his only sons. This must have hurt his other sons terribly, but they had repented of the jealousy that drove them to sell Joseph.

Vayigash: Genesis 44:18-47:27

Genesis 44:27

...my wife bare me two sons. I am tempted to argue that this passage demonstrates that Jacob believed Rachel to be every bit as much his wife as Leah. Although I believe that to be true, this text does not necessarily support it. The Hebrew word for wife is the same as that for woman. It makes no semantic difference between the two terms.

Genesis 46:8-26

These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah... The house of a nomadic patriarch included his wives, his children, his servants, and their children. Each of his wives had her own sub-house made up of her own children, her handmaids, and her handmaids' children if they were also the patriarch's concubines. Elsewhere the Torah explicates that the wives and children of a servant belong to the master if the wife is also a servant of the same master. If an infertile (or under-fertile) woman gave her servant girl to her husband as a concubine, the servant's children were born free and belonged to the free woman as if they were her own, although their inheritance was somewhat in doubt if there were natural children besides. They inherited, but not necessarily as firstborn.

In this passage, the children of Jacob's four wives are sorted first by their mothers and then by their birth order. Leah's children are given first, followed by Zilpah's, Rachel's, and finally Bilhah's. This illustrates the internal structure of Jacob's house according to his wives. Zilpah and her children were a subdivision within Leah's house because Zilpah was always Leah's servant even while a concubine to Jacob. The same is true of Rachel and Bilhah.

Vayechi: Genesis 47:28-50:26

Genesis 47:29

...thy hand under my thigh... See also Genesis 24:2.

Genesis 48:4

...I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee... Procreation is more than a command. It is a blessing by the direct action of God.

Genesis 48:5

As Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. Reuben and Simeon were not completely disinherited, but they lost their place at the head of the family because of their actions and character. Reuben should have been counted as the firstborn, but he violated his father's bed. Simeon should have been counted as the firstborn after Reuben, but he and Levi both proved to be too eager to resort to violence. The status of firstborn was divided between three brothers: Levi, Judah, and Joseph. Levi, because of his later faithfulness to God, received the family priesthood. Judah received the family leadership. Ephraim and Manasseh received the double portion for Joseph.

Genesis 49:3-4

Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel... More reason for Reuben's partial disinheritance.

Genesis 49:5-7

Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty... The reason for Simeon's and Levi's partial disinheritance.

Genesis 49:10

...nor a lawgiver from between his feet... "Between the feet" is an indirect reference to sex in both men and women. Judah's descendants were said to be "between his feet" and a mother's children come from "between her feet."

Genesis 49:31

...there I buried Leah. As discussed earlier, Abraham's concubines were still alive when he died and likely were buried elsewhere by their fathers, their sons, or subsequent husbands. Jacob's concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, were not buried in this cave because they probably died sometime later in Egypt. The real question is why Rachel was not buried here. It was certainly not because Leah held a higher place in

Jacob's affections. I do not believe that it had anything to do with whom Jacob married first or who was a real wife and who was not. The separate burial of Rachel was prophetic of the separation of the two houses of Israel and Judah. The latter has remained physically identifiable with the patriarchs while the former has been scattered and has forgotten their origins. The blessing of Joseph in verse 26 reinforces this idea in my mind: "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Genesis 50:12

And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them. Although a son leaves his father's house, a father's authority never completely dissipates, rightfully holding sway even after his death.

Genesis 50:19

...am I in the place of God? Joseph's response to his brothers' pleas echoed that of his father to Rachel so many years before. Rightful authority is delegated from God. To some degree, a father, mother, or ruler really is in the place of God. Do not mistake rightful authority for divine right, however. Only limited authority is ever granted by God. No man may do as he pleases with his charges.

(See also Genesis 30:2.)

EXODUS – *Shmot*

Shmot: Exodus 1:1-6:1

Exodus 1:13-14

And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage... The Hebrew word translated as “rigour” in v13 in the KJV is *perek*. Strong said that it comes from a root that means to break or fracture.⁹⁰ So the Egyptians were not simply using the Hebrews for their labor. They were trying to keep them weak by breaking their spirit through cruel and pointless labor.

(The hard labor to which Israel was put may explain some of the disparity between the numbers of men and women who came out of Egypt. The nature of men’s work tends to shorten their lives significantly. Robert Sheaffer wrote, “As for contemporary American society: women live an average of seven years longer than men...Twenty-four out of the twenty-five jobs ranked ‘worst’ in terms of pay and working conditions by the Jobs Related Almanac have one thing in common: they are all 95%-100% male. Of those killed in work-related accidents, 94% are men...”⁹¹ If that is true for modern America with her OSHA rules and safety equipment, it must be doubly true for slaves constructing bronze age megaliths.)

There were five genocides recorded in Scripture that were either ordered by God or perpetrated directly by God’s hand. Each one was precipitated by severe injustice on the part of the target, usually combined with sexual immorality.

1. Noah’s flood - Tyrants who were particularly abusive toward women. Possible sexual immorality involving demons. Completely destroyed by God except for one family.
2. Sodom & Gomorrah - Extreme hostility toward travelers. Sexual immorality. Completely destroyed by God except for one family and one small community.
3. Egypt - Severe mistreatment of slaves, infanticide. Brother-sister marriages were encouraged, although not mentioned in the Bible. Population decimated, economy and military destroyed by God.
4. Canaan - Child sacrifice, hostility toward travelers, and sexual immorality. Selectively destroyed by Israel at God’s command.
5. Nineveh - Unspecified systemic violence. They repented and God spared them.

The victims in each of these injustices were essentially defenseless. (Sodom was already guilty before the angels arrived to witness the fact.) God acted for them and removed the perpetrators. In the case of Canaan, he used the Israelites as his tool.

⁹⁰ James Strong, *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Definitions*. Ed. Rick Meyers. (1890. e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

⁹¹ Robert Sheaffer, “Feminism, the Noble Lie.” (Combating Feminist Ms-Information, <http://www.debunker.com/texts/noblelie.html>. Accessed October 23, 2007).

In Psalm 10, David alluded to the connection between the dispossession of the Canaanites and their injustices. Every biblical genocide ordered by God was prompted by ubiquitous injustice, and the plagues of Egypt were no exception. The same principle works in families. Tyranny will break family bonds as surely as it breaks those within and between nations. A father (or mother for that matter) who deliberately provokes his children or a husband who cruelly uses his greater strength against his wife will eventually pay a high price. God executes justice for those who are unable to defend themselves. Justice might not come when we would expect it, want it, or even recognize it, but it inevitably comes.

Exodus 1:16

...the office of a midwife... Perhaps the third oldest profession, the office of midwife has almost always been filled by women. There is no reason to dogmatically maintain that women should never work outside the home when family responsibilities allow it.

...if it be a son... When a woman marries, ideally she leaves her father's people and joins her husband's. Hebrew women were as accustomed to this institution as were their contemporaries. Pharaoh knew that their daughters would be much easier than their sons to assimilate into Egyptian society. If his goal was only population control, one might think Pharaoh would have been wiser to kill the girls, thereby reducing the number of Hebrews for two generations instead of only one. However, there were three good reasons to target boys.

1. If he had been successful, then the next generation of Israelites would have been Egyptians. He would have eliminated the Hebrews forever, while dramatically increasing the number of Egyptians in the next.
2. Battles are fought by men. By God's design, they are more likely to forcefully resist oppression.
3. As a shadow of Yeshua, Moses' arrival was almost certainly prophesied. Pharaoh, like Herod centuries later, thought to circumvent God's design through force.

Exodus 1:17

But the midwives feared God... Authority and power, except for God's, never translates into a right to demand—or an obligation to give—absolute obedience. To the contrary, we are all obligated to obey God rather than men. Where there is legitimate room for disagreement, wives should yield to their husbands, but where there is no such room, a woman will be blessed by God for refusing to participate in wickedness. These two women defied a king, yet God praised them for it, even having their names recorded as “fair” and “splendid.”⁹² This is an example of the hierarchy designed into God's law. It is proper to submit to your rulers until they command you to do that which is immoral. If the husbands of these two women had

⁹² *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definitions*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

told them to kill the Hebrew babies, their deceit would not have been less praiseworthy. A tyrant for a husband is worse to a woman than a tyrant for a king.

However, I must caution against too broad an application of this principle. It is most certainly not a woman's right to rebel against her husband on account of his immoral conduct. A woman may disobey her husband if he commands her to do something clearly immoral, to defend herself from injury, or to defend someone else. Otherwise his immoral conduct is cause neither for disobedience nor divorce. She may challenge him, question him, or rebuke him if necessary and if done with respect and in private, but that is all that she may do.

Exodus 1:21

...he made them houses. God did not establish a matriarchy, but rewarded the faithfulness of these Hebrew women by giving them many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Exodus 2:16-17

...seven daughters, and they came and drew water... Seven daughters, seven spirits of wisdom, seven churches. The daughters of Reuel represent the Holy Spirit drawing living water for the Father's flock.

...the shepherds came and drove them away... The leaders of our churches and families—men—can drive out the Spirit by selfishness and injustice. A peaceful and godly home must be filled with selflessness and kindness. A generous matriarch is preferable to a penurious patriarch.

...but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. On the other hand, a generous patriarch is the best of all. His nature invites the Spirit into his house, and his family thrives under his hand. Consider Isaiah 4:1 in light of Moses' actions at the well. The shepherds were not worthy of Reuel's daughters, but Moses could have had all seven if he had wanted them.

Exodus 2:21

...and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. Like Joseph before him, Moses married the daughter of a foreign priest. The Midianites were distant relatives, being descendants of Abraham through his wife, Keturah, and so Zipporah seems a better choice than Asenath, but traditionally she is still considered a pagan. However, Reuel means "friend of God," and he might have been a believer in a pagan nation, much like Abraham before he left Haran.

Exodus 4:23

...I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn. The misdeeds of the fathers affect the sons and the whole house. God was not promising to punish Pharaoh's son, but to punish Pharaoh through his son.

Exodus 4:24

...**the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.** The text is unclear as to whether God meant to kill Gershom or Moses. The immediately preceding threat to Pharaoh's son leads me to believe Gershom was the target. Just as Pharaoh's house and firstborn son were threatened by his disobedience to God, so was Moses' house and firstborn son threatened by his.

Exodus 4:25-26

...**and cut off the foreskin of her son...** Circumcision was not completely unknown among the Midianites, since they were also children of Abraham, but it was probably not widely practiced. The Hebrews in Egypt had also largely given it up. Speculation about what was going on in verses 24-26 is extensive, primarily because the text is so ambiguous. Who was to be killed? How? Why? How did Zipporah know it had to do with circumcision? So I add my own tenuous conjecture to the din.

I suspect Moses had wanted to circumcise Gershom on the eighth day as God had commanded Abraham. Zipporah had strenuously objected, and Moses had conceded to her. Now Moses was on his way to threaten the life of another man's son for that man's disobedience to God. Yeshua said, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." How could Moses cast stones at Pharaoh, when he was guilty himself? God threatened Gershom's life because of Moses' hypocrisy. Zipporah immediately understood what was happening, repented of her rebellion, and acted for Moses. Some rabbis have said that Moses did not perform the circumcision himself, because God's attack took the form of a severe illness. As I have said, I am not convinced the attack was against Moses' person at all, but neither am I convinced that my explanation is so much better than theirs.

Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. The Hebrew term translated here as "husband" is not the usual word for husband, *iysh*, but *khathan*, which can refer to any male related by marriage.⁹³ I believe Zipporah was lamenting her marriage to a Hebrew instead of a Midianite. Even though Moses had left his own people to live among those of his wife, God still considered him and his children to be Israelites. According to God's model of family dynamics a man does not join his wife's family, but she joins his.

Exodus 6:1

...**what I will do to Pharaoh.** The implication is that if Pharaoh had not acted pettily in forcing the Israelites to gather straw for their bricks, then his punishments would not have been so severe. In any relationship in which the weaker is abused by the stronger, God will be on the side of the weaker. Husbands, remember that God sometimes builds up the wicked in order that their fall might be more remarkable, and be careful to rule your family with kindness, mercy, and patience. Wives, remember that the spiteful servant is justly punished, and you cannot always hide

⁹³ Strong, *Definitions*.

behind the good will of a soft-hearted man or the abuses of an unjust court. You have an advocate who is more powerful than any on earth, so do not resort to vindictiveness and the civil war promoted by the divorce industry.

Va'eira: Exodus 6:2-9:35

Exodus 6:13

...gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt... God delegates all authority to be used for a purpose. Rulers have authority over cities and regions and nations to be a terror to evildoers. Bishops and elders have authority over congregations for their teaching and guidance. Husbands have authority over their wives, and fathers have authority over their children, but not so they can do whatever they want with them. If Moses had ordered Pharaoh to let the Ethiopians go or if he had led the Hebrews in armed rebellion, he would have overstepped his commission. He was granted authority over Israel and Pharaoh solely for the purpose of bringing Israel out of Egypt. Husbands and fathers and mothers also hold their authority conditionally. Men may not order their wives and children to lie or steal, and mothers may not severely treat their children.

Exodus 6:14

These be the heads of their fathers' houses... Contrary to modern Jewish practice, nationality is never determined by one's birth mother. By God's design, all nations are counted according to their fathers. Most people who call themselves Jewish today are descended from Jewish men, but many are almost certainly not. Fortunately for them, naturalization is also a biblical concept. The mixed multitude that left Egypt with the Hebrews were considered by God to be Israelites. Many others are unknowingly descended from long forgotten Israelite roots, and God might someday call them out again to rejoin with their Jewish brothers in the land of Israel.

Exodus 6:20

...his father's sister... This relationship was clearly prohibited by the sexual codes recorded later. According to the logic I applied to Abraham's and Sarah's marriage, perhaps it should have happened and perhaps not. Amram lived a very long life, but not nearly as long as Abraham. On the other hand, Jochebed was one more step removed from Amram than Sarah was from Abraham. Moses makes no comment regarding the morality of their choice, and we really cannot judge from our perspective.

Bo: Exodus 10:1-13:16

Exodus 11:5

And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die... Although the Torah is explicit that the firstborn males of God's people belong to him, it is implicit that the firstborn males of *all* nations belong to him. No matter one's cultural inheritance, God's intent for every firstborn is to act as his family's kinsman redeemer. In taking Egypt's firstborn, as opposed to the youngest or the strongest, God denied the Egyptians their kinsmen redeemers. It was an unequivocal statement of ownership.

Exodus 13:12

The males shall be the LORD's. All firstborn males belong to God, and are set apart for a special purpose.

Exodus 13:15

...all that openeth the matrix... As the law concerning the treatment of children from multiple wives (Deuteronomy 21:15-17) makes clear, "firstborn" refers to the firstborn child of his father. "Openeth the matrix" is a figure of speech extending from the fact that most households, even in a polygynous culture, will have only one man and one woman and should not to be taken literally. Every house with male children must have a firstborn and only one firstborn. If the first child born in a house is a female, she was the one to "open the matrix," but she is not called the firstborn. If there are two or three wives in a house, there will be a first child born of each wife, but only one firstborn in the house.

...being males... Because the firstborn is always male, so the Messiah and King, the firstborn of the resurrection, the only begotten Son of God, and the kinsman redeemer of all mankind must be male. Patriarchy is intertwined with God's economy on every level, and if one rejects patriarchy—and thereby the kinsman redeemer—one also rejects its special protections for women, children, travelers, the sick, and the poor. Ultimately, they might also reject the Messiah and the salvation he offers.

Beshalach: Exodus 13:17-17:16

Exodus 13:17

Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war... Ambition and drive can be good things. Sometimes a direct assault is the best plan, but a husband and father must also think of his family and not drive them faster than they are able to go. Some lessons are very hard to learn and to accept. We must always be moving forward, improving our positions, but sometimes we have to move in a circuitous route or at an easy pace. The only completely unacceptable routes are sitting still or returning to Egypt.

Exodus 13:18

But God led the people about... The people did not go where they wanted, and God did not lead them by the easiest route. He led them where he needed them to go. Israel, God's bride, was not in charge. She could make requests of him, but she could not issue demands without risking her own destruction. Following the example of Israel and her Husband, wives should follow their husbands even if that road leads into the wilderness or through the territory of giants.

Exodus 15:13

...unto thy holy habitation. When an unbeliever converts to belief, he leaves behind his former ways, the customs of his unbelieving kin, and joins with God's people. When a woman marries a man, she must leave behind her family and her family's customs and adopt those of her husband.

Exodus 15:20

Miriam the prophetess... Adam Clarke wrote that Miriam was only a prophetess to the Hebrew women, while Moses and Aaron spoke to the men.⁹⁴ In this instance he is correct, but there is no reason to assume she was always limited to delivering prophecies to women. Hulda and Deborah obviously had no such limitation.

Exodus 16:9

...he hath heard your murmurings. A husband must be attentive to the moods, desires, and needs in his house. Your wife and children will not always explicitly tell you what they need.

⁹⁴ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

Exodus 17:12

Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands... Like the two staves of the Ark of the Covenant, Aaron and Hur served as Moses' supports and supplementary strength.⁹⁵ They were his *ezer kenegdo*. Without such a support, a man is severely handicapped. Such is the value of a good wife, another *ezer kenegdo*.

⁹⁵ There is another lesson here on the dual and complimentary roles of priest (Aaron of Levi) and king (Hur of Judah), but that might be for another volume.

Yitro: Exodus 18-20

Exodus 18:2

Then Jethro...took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back. No one knows why Moses had sent Zipporah and his sons back to Midian. Keil and Delitzsch imply that "So he let him go" in Exodus 4:26 refers to Moses letting Zipporah go back and then going on without her.⁹⁶ That might have been the occasion of their separation, but I rather think that statement represents the release of Gershom from the operation. They might have separated after the incident at the inn on the way to Egypt or he might have sent them away when life became too dangerous during the plagues. In either case, this was not a divorce, only a pragmatic and temporary separation.

Exodus 18:7

And Moses...did obeisance... Moses' obeisance to Jethro was not due to any special authority inherent in the office of father-in-law. It was an appropriate and voluntary act of respect for his wife's father, his friend, his former employer, and a leader of a people.

Exodus 18:18

Thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Although the husband is meant to be the head of his house, the head cannot live or even command the body on its own. Effective command requires the trust and cooperation of the commanded as well as good communication and delegation. A husband's and father's authority may be freely delegated to servants, sons, and wives. When his children are young, he authorizes his executive officer, his wife. Later, that responsibility should gradually move to his lieutenants, his sons, as he teaches them to be men. Under most circumstances, the firstborn son should be placed ahead of his siblings, but that is not an inviolate law. Reuben was passed over for Judah, Ishmael for Isaac, et cetera, all for good reasons. The point is that a man cannot expect to effectively govern his house on his own. He must train his family to lead in his place, and he must trust them to do so.

Exodus 18:21

...able men... The word used here for "man" is *ish* and not *adam*. It implies that males are intended and not mankind in general. In accordance with God's example, Jethro advised Moses to choose men as leaders of the people, and that is what he did. All of Israel's anointed leaders were men. (Prophets are not leaders so much as they are messengers. Their office is honorable and certainly carries authority, but it is not

⁹⁶ Johann Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

the authority required for leading a nation or a congregation.) Maleness is not the only requirement for leadership in Israel. These men were to be “able” or *chayil*. They must have proven their ability by success in business or war. Paul included more detail in his letters to Timothy and Titus, but his requirements were essentially the same as Jethro’s.

...such as fear God... Ability alone is not enough to make a great leader of God’s people. He must also be a man of God.

...men of truth... Not men who are apt to deceive their way into office. The ineptitude of the vast majority of modern politicians is obvious to anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear. That we continue to elect such men and women into leadership is proof of the old adage, we get that government which we deserve.

...hating covetousness... It is a good thing to desire to lead God’s people, but not to desire it overly much. Remember Yeshua’s words: The first will be last, and he who would lead must serve.

Exodus 19:3

...and the LORD called unto him... It is nearly a universal practice that a man must ask a bride’s father for permission to marry her. The following passage is very much a marriage proposal. Although God must ask no one for permission to do anything, he completed that analogy by making his proposal first through Israel’s leader and not directly to the bride.

Exodus 19:5

...if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant... Even God has limits. His favor is conditional. A wife who fails to respect her husband should not be surprised when the romance fades from her marriage.

...above all people... A man should hold his wife above all others. No one but God—and, by logical extension, the task to which God has called him—should be more important to him. Her welfare must come before that of his friends, coworkers, superiors, or subordinates.

Exodus 19:6

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests... The role of priest is that of intercessor. He is an intermediary between God and man. That is the role of Israel to the world, conveying God’s standards of behavior, as well as his Messiah. It is the role of a father to his house. It is also the role of a mother to her children, teaching them her husband’s laws and their roles in his house. She intercedes with him on their behalf and reinforces his commands with them.

Exodus 19:8

All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. The response of Israel’s leaders reminds me of Noah’s wife. When she married him, she had no idea that many years

later, she would have to endure public humiliation for his sake. Israel did not ask God what his commands would be. They only said, “We will obey.” I have heard that the rabbis believe that Israel was not God’s first choice of a bride. He went to each of the seventy nations in turn and asked them the same question: “I will be your God and treasure you above everything if you promise to obey my voice and keep my covenant.” Every one of them wanted to know what obedience would entail before making such a commitment. Every one of them but Israel. Many brides at the altar promise to obey their husbands, but in their hearts they know they will only obey so long as his commands are not too unusual, embarrassing, uncomfortable, or otherwise too objectionable. She is an amazing woman indeed who speaks those words and means them.

Exodus 19:15

Come not at your wives. There are times and places when we must abstain from that which would otherwise be lawful. In preparation for especially holy times, when we are to be in closest communion with God, we are to abstain from sexual relations. God does not provide a reason for this command, and I can only offer guesses that are almost certain to be wrong. I suspect that it is the opposite of the reason that blood sacrifices enable us to approach him even closer. Animals were never killed to appease divine vengeance, but there is a spiritual effect in their blood and ashes that allows us to approach God more closely than otherwise. The reverse must be true of many activities that are not sinful, but that induce a state of spiritual separation: sexual intercourse, childbirth, menstruation, handling of dead bodies, et cetera. The blood of animals acts to cover our sins, our imperfections, while sex may somehow act to highlight them.

Exodus 19:24

...let not the priests and the people break through... The marriage contract (*ketubah*) of Israel’s union with God was made here at Sinai, with Moses representing Israel’s father, Egypt. Although Moses sometimes disagreed with God and even negotiated, Israel herself could only say yes or no. Her husband set the boundaries of their relationship, and she obeyed them or not. In any case, Israel did not set God’s boundaries, and wives are not to set their husbands’.

Exodus 20:1

And God spake all these words... This is the marriage contract between God and Israel.

Exodus 20:3

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Idolatry is the most serious offense a person can commit against God. In marriage, it is analogous to adultery. “Before me” does not mean “ahead of me” or “preceding me.” It means “besides me” or “in

competition with me.” This is the pattern for the relationship of husband and wife. “You shall have no other men besides me.” Notice that, although he said, “You are my people, and I am your God,” he never states the reverse of this command. He never said, “I will have no other people besides you.” Likewise, marriage to one woman carries no inherent prohibition against marriage to another. A woman may have only one husband, but a man may have multiple wives.

Exodus 20:5

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them... Sexual intercourse is not the only thing that a wife must not do with another man. Fawning over him and thinking about him in a sexually charged manner is nearly as damaging, and is tantamount to adultery. It is also inappropriate for a man to give too much attention to another man’s wife or a woman who cannot be his for some other reason. That includes forbidden classes of women, such as close relatives, as well as women on television, in advertising, in pornography, and every other woman with whom he has no intention or ability to seek a marriage.

...nor serve them... Nor may she actually have sexual intercourse with another man. This is the very definition of “adultery” as the word is used throughout the Bible: sexual relations between a married woman and a man who is not her husband. God did not tell Israel that another people could not serve him, only that they could not serve another god. Although it is a sin for a man to have sex with a woman who is not his wife, it is not adultery so long as the object of his desire is unmarried and unbetrothed.

Exodus 20:10

...thou shalt not do any work... God lists you, your son, daughter, manservant, maidservant, and the foreigner within the gates. None of these may do any work on the Sabbath. But what about your wife? Is the woman included in “you?” I believe she is, and the account of the whole people resting from gathering manna on the seventh day supports that assumption. However, I do not know why God did not name women explicitly. It might be to highlight the parallel between the weekly Sabbath and the seven-year Sabbath in which all male Hebrew servants are to be set free, while female servants are not.

Exodus 20:12

Honor thy father and thy mother... In honoring our parents, there are three ways in which our days may be prolonged in the land which God has entrusted to us:

1. *Peace.* Respect for parents and for the elders of our community in general encourages peace. Rebellion and intergenerational conflict accomplishes nothing. Obedience and respect builds stronger families and stronger futures.
2. *Wisdom.* We will be more successful in all our endeavors, and we will live longer if we do not repeat the mistakes of past generations. If we do

not respect our parents we will not be able to respect their experiences and the wisdom they have to teach us.

3. *Wealth.* God's plan for the nations was that each would possess a specific land area. In order to ensure that Israel (and all of us) remained on the land that God had set apart for them, he gave us rules for inheritance. One of those rules is the disinheritance of a rebellious son. A son who commits some grievous sin against his parents could be cut off from his family. In gold and silver, we may build wealth and lose it, but if we follow God's laws for bequeathing land and honoring parents, then we will always have the land to sustain us.

Exodus 20:14

Thou shalt not commit adultery. This verse seems almost too obvious to mention. However, the word adultery conveys a meaning quite different to modern English speakers than God intended for the original commandment. Adultery is not, as the online Merriam-Webster dictionary says, "voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man and someone other than his wife or between a married woman and someone other than her husband." Only the second half of that definition is Biblically accurate. While sexual activity between a married man and an unmarried woman is fornication, it is inaccurate to call it adultery. Throughout the Bible the Hebrew word for adultery, *naaf*, is used only to describe sexual activity (or idolatry in metaphor) between a married woman and a man who is not her husband.

Exodus 20:17

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife... There are three lessons to be learned from this command.

The first is that sin is not always limited to actions. Fostering a desire for another man's wife is the same as actually taking that man's wife, at least so far as it harms you. Yeshua said, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." The sin is not in the thought itself, but in the fostering of it.

The second lesson is that ownership is not a binary concept—either true or false—and nothing in the world can be owned completely. If we own something, we usually think that we can do anything we want with it. Since everything in the world really belongs to God, it is important to understand that we never have the right to do anything we want with our possessions. I might possess a wife, but my ownership of her is qualified. I do not own her to the same extent that I might own a car or a tool. Everything in the world has been given into our possession in trust. We are only stewards of God's creation. A man is given authority over his wife, but it is not absolute authority. He has authority over his son, but it is not absolute authority. Just as in the case of the servant who buried his talent, if he abuses either, God may choose to take them away from him and give them to another.

The third lesson is that if a man is limited to one wife by the use of the singular in this commandment, then he must also be limited to one house, one donkey, one servant, one ox, one ass, and only one of everything else that a neighbor might possess.

Exodus 20:25

...thou shalt not build it of hewn stone... God requires this, the most dramatic act of worship that man can perform, to be done on natural, undressed stones. Makeup and hair care products and jewelry and beautiful dresses all have their place. There is nothing inherently wrong with them. But the most dramatic expression of love between husband and wife is done unadorned and in our most natural state. The natural beauty of a woman ranks among the most spectacular of God's creations, and there is very little one can do to improve upon it. There is a great deal one can do to degrade it. Natural is almost always better.

Exodus 20:26

...that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon. The purpose of this law is twofold. First, it helps to maintain propriety in the course of the priest's duties. Second, it reminds us that, although the Scriptures and even the Tabernacle are full of sexual metaphor, sexual acts are not part of God's religion.

Mishpatim: Exodus 21-24

Exodus 21:3-6

If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself. I see three levels of meaning in this law.

1. *P'shat*: If a man buys a Hebrew slave who is married, the slave's wife does not become the master's slave along with her husband, and the slave will take her with him when he leaves the master's employ. If the master gave the slave one of his female slaves as a wife, she does not cease to be his slave when her husband goes free. She must stay behind unless her master allows her to be purchased or otherwise redeemed.
2. *Drash*: Prior claims are not automatically superseded by more recent claims. If God delegates authority over a nation to a king, that does not mean the nation no longer belongs to God. If the king decides to leave his homeland or if he is removed from the throne, God will grant authority over it to another.
3. *Sod*: The slave is a believer and the master is Yeshua, our Messiah.
 - a. There is an unbeliever who converts and then falls away again. If he was unmarried when he converted and remains unmarried when he falls away, then he is only harming himself. It is an unfortunate thing, but still simple.
 - b. There is a married couple, and both of them are sinners. One of them comes to believe in God and repents, but the other does not. If the believing spouse then falls away again, he leaves God's congregation with his wife. This is still relatively uncomplicated.
 - c. There is an unbeliever who converts and then falls away again. In the meantime, however, he married a fellow believer. Their marriage remains valid—sanctified by God—so long as the unbeliever is willing to stay in it. He continues as one of God's people, only in a state of rebellion. If the unbeliever chooses to leave his spouse and children, then the marriage is dissolved as if he had died.
 - d. Finally, there is an unbeliever who converts and marries another believer. He dedicates the remainder of his life and his family to serving God and his kingdom. His marriage and family will be blessed.

Exodus 21:7

And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant... The following verses show that the daughter was sold as a concubine and not as a mere servant. It is within a father's authority to approve or disapprove his daughter's marriage or even

to sell her if he finds it necessary. I cannot imagine any but the most extreme circumstances in which it would be wise to force a girl into a marriage, but it has never been a sin to simply act foolishly.

...she shall not go out as the menservants do. Because she was sold as a concubine, she cannot simply leave. Concubinage is a subset of marriage, and it does not end in the seventh year, despite our western cultural inclinations to the contrary. God gave this law to protect the interests of the concubine, to prevent her husband from selling her to be someone else's concubine. In effect it is a law against prostitution and serial monogamy. If a man takes a concubine, he is not allowed to purchase only her most youthful years, but he must continue to provide for her as he would any other wife. Note that a man may be set free. This is because a man may never be sold as a husband. While a woman may be a slave to her husband (concubinage), a man may never be a slave to his wife. If a female Israelite is purchased as a slave, but not as a concubine, then she would be released along with her male counterparts.

Exodus 21:8

If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself... Most translations render this verse as the King James Version has it: the master has betrothed the girl to himself. The Hebrew, however, has the negative particle, *lo*, before the word for "betrothed," implying that a more accurate translation would be "If she please not her master *so that he does not betroth* her to himself." The meaning is essentially unchanged, but the intent of the law is more readily apparent with a more literal translation.

If a man purchases a slave with the intent to consider her as a concubine for himself, but then decides against it for whatever reason, he may recoup the money he paid and return her to her family, but he cannot simply sell her to someone else. This law does not apply if he has formally betrothed her or consummated the marriage. In that case he may not send her away except for adultery. This allows for a probationary period during which the girl will live in the master's house, while he evaluates her compatibility with his existing family and habits. It also discourages her from being used and then dismissed at will. The master must marry her himself, marry her to his son, or allow her to be redeemed by her family.

Exodus 21:9

...after the manner of daughters. If a man buys a woman for his son, he must treat her as if she were his own daughter. This means that he must give her a dowry to match the bride price he has already paid. She will be redeemed from servitude and will marry the son as a free wife, not as a concubine.

Exodus 21:10-11

If he take him another wife... As a good teacher of mine frequently states, God does not regulate that which he forbids. God did not give us laws about how to

conduct our homosexuality or adultery; he said, “Thou shalt not.” Therefore it is lawful for a man to take another wife so long as he does so within the bounds that God has set.

And if he do not these three unto her... Although this law specifically addresses the treatment of a concubine, it follows that a free wife deserves at least as much consideration as a slave. These three items are not an all-encompassing list of everything a husband should do for his wife. They are the bare minimum: physical sustenance, covering, and sex. First, he must provide for her physical survival, ensuring she has sufficient food and water for her and her children. Second, he must provide her with physical and spiritual covering. Physical covering consists of clothing or the cloth to make it, perhaps shelter and protection as well. Spiritual covering consists primarily of exercising authority over his house and family: prayer and intercession, instruction, standards, boundaries, et cetera. Third, he must at least attempt to give her children. Regularly. A husband is not obligated to ensure his wife a high standard of living or a life of luxury. If he is able to do so reasonably, then it would be to his benefit as well as hers, but it is not an absolute requirement.

A wife has obligations to her husband, but they are of a different character.

...without money. If a man does not provide his concubine—and wife, since a free woman has more rights than a slave—with these minimum provisions, she may leave him without repaying her bride price. I am uncertain whether or not a free woman would be entitled to her dowry if she left of her own accord. Such things should probably be spelled out in a *ketubah* or marriage contract.

Exodus 21:15

And he that smiteth his father, or his mother... “Smiteth” implies more than a temper tantrum or momentary lapse of judgment. It implies a deliberate attempt to do serious injury or even death. This is evidence of how important the parent-child relationship is to God. It is not entirely coincidental that this, and other laws concerning murder, immediately follow a law that allows a woman to leave her husband. If her husband does not provide her with the necessary sustenance for survival, he probably does not provide for her children either, and she would undoubtedly take her children with her. Our experience with divorce in recent decades demonstrates that children who grow up without fathers are exponentially more likely to become murderers and violent criminals of all types.⁹⁷ If children are to grow into capable and strong men and women, then fathers must care for their wives, while mothers must respect and obey their husbands.

Exodus 21:17

And he that curseth his father or mother... The verse is both more harsh and more lenient than it seems to be at first. It is harsher in that “curseth” may be too

⁹⁷ Jay H. Carper, “What Puts Teens at Risk? And What Can Be Done About It?” (Jay’s Thoughts on Stuff, <http://www.historycarper.com/wordpress/?p=9>. Accessed 04 April 2006.)

strong a word in English for the Hebrew word *qalal*. It is more lenient in that the behavior of the accused must go far beyond cursing in order to bring a conviction.

Exodus 22:16-17

And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed... This law immediately follows a list of instructions on how to deal with theft, fraud, and destruction of property, because it is, in part, exactly that. The man who seduces a virgin who is not betrothed has taken advantage of her youth and stolen an important part of her future.

...he shall surely endow her to be his wife. None of God's laws is purposely designed to cause suffering. Verse 16 echoes verse 14, which concludes, "He shall surely make it good." "Endow her to be his wife" could also be accurately translated as "pay her bride price." This is not a punishment for punishment's sake; it is compensation for loss.

If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him... It is a father's right to approve or disapprove his daughter's choice of husband. If he is wise, then he will not force her to marry someone hateful to her. He will work together with her and her mother to choose a suitable mate. The man in this case has already made his choice, whether intentionally or not. The girl's father may either disallow the marriage or force it, but the bride price must be paid either way.

Some believe that sexual intercourse between two unmarried people automatically makes them married in God's eyes. I do not believe that is correct. Having sexual intercourse makes you one with that person physically, but it does not make you married. If it did, then the girl's father would have no authority to veto her marriage. This is not a lightening-fast marriage and divorce. I have also seen the word "entice" in this verse rendered "rape" by people arguing against the Biblical view of men and women and of marriage. There is no justification for this. This passage is not about rape, but about fornication.

Exodus 22:19

Whosoever lieth with a beast... As with verse 17, this law is not about causing suffering as punishment. It is about keeping the nation healthy. Every living thing was designed to reproduce after its kind. Attempting to cross that boundary, even in imitation, is a vile and dangerous act, both spiritually and physically.

Exodus 22:24

...your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. All nations and religions know at least something of God's truth. The notion of karma is rooted in observations of the real world. If you treat others poorly, you will find yourself being treated poorly. If you are harsh with widows and orphans, then someone will be harsh with you, your widow, and your orphaned children.

Exodus 22:28

Thou shalt not revile the gods... This does not refer to pagan deities or even to angels. The word “gods” is translated from the Hebrew *elohim*, which literally means “rulers”. It is a title applied to God, because he is the supreme ruler of everything. It also applies to judges, princes, governors, fathers, and husbands. Children and wives should be respectful toward their fathers and husbands no matter if they are foolish or unfair or even abusive. It is usually appropriate to defend oneself against assault and even more so to defend others, but remember Yeshua’s behavior before Pilate and the Sanhedrin, and remember Paul’s apology when he learned he had been disrespectful to the high priest.

Exodus 23:26

There shall nothing cast their young... Walking the path that God has set for you brings blessings on you, your family, and everyone under your authority. You will live longer and have more children than if you lived by your own wisdom.

Exodus 24:8

Behold the blood of the covenant... All covenants are properly sealed with blood, hence the blood shed by a broken maidenhead. This is one reason why virginity is so important. A marriage may be made with a widow, a divorcee, or some other non-virgin, but all of those marriages will be missing an important element in the establishment of a covenant.

Trumah: Exodus 25:1-27:19

Exodus 25:1-40

And they shall make an ark... On one level the Ark of the Covenant is the symbol of the Father in the Tabernacle and the Temple, while the Menorah represents the Holy Spirit, and the Showbread Table represents the Son. (On another level, the entire Tabernacle is a model for every individual.) Likewise, the Heavenly Father is an example for earthly fathers, the Holy Spirit is an example for earthly mothers,⁹⁸ and the Son is an example for earthly children, especially the firstborn son of his father. The details of all three articles are significant for every single person, as we occupy a spectrum of traits and roles, and we can never say that one person or one sex can never be allowed to fill the role of another. But the characteristics of the Heavenly Father as revealed in the Ark more precisely apply to fathers than to anyone else, and likewise the characteristics of the Heavenly Son as revealed in the Showbread Table apply to firstborn sons. The Menorah is specifically a pattern for women, but also for all types of deacons, servants, and helpers.

The instructions contained in Exodus 25 are repeated in minute detail in Exodus 37, demonstrating the great weight which God assigns to these things. I am certain that all of the precise measurements have important meanings, both spiritual and mundane (See Ezekiel 43:10-11), but I will not pretend to know what all of those meanings are. Many of those meanings are not directly related to the subject matter of this work, and many others I simply do not know. The best that I can do is to prayerfully consider these instructions and the teaching I have received and ask God for understanding and the ability to express that understanding to you, my reader. What mistakes I make are purely my own. I do not claim this work to be infallible revelation from God. The same is true for the instructions concerning the Showbread Table, the Menorah, the various curtains, pillars, and other articles.

Exodus 25:2

Of every man that giveth it willingly... The familial roles taught in the construction of the articles of the Tabernacle should not be forced. A husband should not force his wife to do her job, and a wife should not force her husband to do his job. Teaching and advice certainly have their proper places, and prayer is always in order, but force and threats rarely are.

⁹⁸ To repeat myself, the Holy Spirit is not female, but embodies many feminine characteristics and fulfills the role of a mother and wife in the divine pattern for family. We must be very careful with this analogy. Very often, the Spirit takes on a distinctly masculine role in both behavior and function. Witness the inspiration of Adam and the impregnation of Mary.

Exodus 25:8

Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. When you are living according to God's plan, without resentment or rebellion, God himself will live with you. Your prayers, your understanding, and your spiritual hearing will all be more effective.

Exodus 25:9

...after the pattern of the tabernacle... The stuff of the wilderness Tabernacle was not made according to a design only written on paper or fashioned into a small scale model. It was patterned after the real Tabernacle in Heaven in which Yeshua serves as our divine High Priest. That Tabernacle is a shadow of something yet higher: God himself. It is also an image after which we are to pattern ourselves, both as individuals, as families, and as communities.

Exodus 25:10

...shittim wood... According to Scofield, wood represents humanity,⁹⁹ and John Gill wrote that acacia (translation of *shittim*) wood is decay resistant.¹⁰⁰ According to *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, it is also a gnarled, thorny tree like a hawthorn¹⁰¹ from which it would be very difficult to obtain a significant amount or length of lumber. Our flesh is often twisted and gnarled, making it very difficult for us to work toward creative purposes. A father should, as far as possible, avoid the things that corrupt the flesh: drunkenness, licentiousness, excessive leisure, fear, et cetera. The raw material out of which he is made must be cultivated and trained in order to produce lengths of lumber sufficient to make anything of real substance and size.

...two cubits and a half...a cubit and a half...a cubit and a half... I know that the dimensions of the Ark and the other articles of the Tabernacle are recorded for our benefit, but at present I can only guess blindly as to what we are to learn from them. I offer this small bit of speculation only as one possibility and not as anything certain. The volume of the Ark, at least as measured by these external dimensions, is five and five-eighth cubic cubits. Five could represent life as creatures "that hath life" were first created on the fifth day or it could represent the five books of the Torah. Eight represents new beginnings or rebirth. The Ark was the heart of the Tabernacle. Within it were the stone tablets, while the staff, and a jar of manna were placed before it (Exodus 16:33-34). When we have God's Law (the tablets) written in our hearts, when we have made him our supreme authority (the staff), and when we have put our faith completely in him (the manna), then we will have life both in this world (five cubits) and eventual resurrection into eternal life (five-eighths cubit).

⁹⁹ Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, *Scofield Reference Notes*. (1917. e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

¹⁰⁰ Dr. John Gill, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

¹⁰¹ M.G. Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 3rd edition*. (Thomas Nelson, 1897. e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

Exodus 25:11

...overlay it with pure gold, within and without... Gold represents purity and righteousness. A father must exemplify righteousness in his family, not just in his actions (“without”) but in his heart and mind (“within”) as well.

...a crown of gold round about. A father is to rule his house with righteousness, according to the laws of God, and not of man, or else this crown would be of wood instead of gold. However, this is not exactly the same word usually used for a royal crown, but it is the root of that word. *Zer* is used here, whereas *nezer* is the usual word for a royal crown.¹⁰²

Exodus 25:12

...four rings of gold... The number four often represents something of the Messiah. Perhaps these four gold rings represent the righteousness of Yeshua that is accounted to us, and enables him to support us. They could also represent the supporting role of the firstborn, how he is his father’s first strength.

Exodus 25:13

...staves of shittim wood... A man has three primary agents of support: God, his wife, and his firstborn son. These staves are the instruments which carry the Ark, but they are made of acacia wood, perhaps signifying something of flesh, but cultivated and trained. The firstborn is his father’s first strength, but the other children reinforce him and expand their father’s reach. Alternatively, the number two may represent separation and division. It is the role of the High Priest, which Yeshua now fills, to teach the people to maintain a separation between clean and unclean. Within the family, this is a task of the father, and, later, the firstborn.

Exodus 25:15

The staves...shall not be taken from it. There are two human agents of support, which are never to be taken from a man: his wife and his son. The staves are made of the same material as the ark: acacia and gold. The wife was created for the express purpose of serving as her husband’s support, his *ezer kenegdo* or complementary strength. God hates divorce, and a man’s wife (or support) should never be removed from him if at all possible. I do not mean that she should never stray more than three feet from his side, nor that she should remain in a physically dangerous situation. I mean that God’s blueprint for marriage says that she should remain his support throughout his life.

A man’s sons, especially the firstborn, are his arms and hands in the world around him. They extend his reach and influence. Although daughters leave their families to join with their husbands’, but sons are the building blocks of their father’s house. Without wife and son, a father can never be complete. He must

¹⁰² Strong, *Definitions*.

always rely on them for support in his role as father. If they are taken away, if he drives them away, or if they rebel, then he loses an essential part of himself.

Exodus 25:16

...the testimony which I shall give thee. Fathers, more than anyone else, must hide the laws of God within their hearts.¹⁰³ They are to teach them to their children and to everyone in their houses. They must make the Torah their comprehensive guide for living and for ruling their houses, emphasizing love for God and man in order to soften their hearts so that the Law may be more easily transferred from stone to flesh. Instead of simply placing the stone tablets within a box of flesh, the Law will someday be carved into the wood itself.

Exodus 25:17

And thou shalt make a mercy seat... The mercy seat may symbolize other aspects of the father's role, but primarily I think it represents the covering of the Messiah. The literal meaning of the word translated here as "mercy seat" (*kaporeth*) is "covering."¹⁰⁴ It comes from the verb, "*kaphar*," which means "to cover" or "to coat," and is the same word translated as "pitch" in Genesis 6:14, in the sense of painting.¹⁰⁵ I believe that the Ark's covering is emblematic of the kingdom of Heaven and the authority of the King, who is the head of every man. According to Paul, Messiah is to be the head (or cover) of every man, while the man is to be the head (or cover) of his wife and family. The effective father will acknowledge Yeshua as his covering and will willingly subject himself to the laws of God and the lordship of Yeshua, just as his wife is to acknowledge the lordship of her husband.

Exodus 25:18

...two cherubim of gold... Having established (to my own satisfaction, at least) that the mercy seat is emblematic of the covering that Messiah makes over all men, I must suppose that these angels are related to Paul's admonition to the Corinthians: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." By "angels" he was referring either directly to the mercy seat or to actual angels whose function is somehow represented by the figures on the mercy seat, which I think is more probable. This is especially supported by the attitude of the cherubim. They are looking inward at the covering and covering it in turn, probably to represent the throne of the Father around which cherubim sing his praises. God promised to meet with Israel from between and above the outstretched wings of the cherubim. From this, I surmise that men must accept only the spiritual covering of Messiah,¹⁰⁶ while women must also accept the spiritual covering of their husbands, represented by the veil that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the

¹⁰³ In another sense, the Ark, with the Law, the manna, and the staff, represents the ideal state of heart within each one of us.

¹⁰⁴ Strong, *Definitions*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

Tabernacle. Otherwise the communion of either of them with God may be hindered either by or because of the cherubim. Either the cherubim will actively interfere in their communications or else their function in that communication will be disrupted by our attitudes—a sort of electrospiritual interference.

Exodus 25:20

And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high... Our prayers rise to God through the wings of the actual cherubim of which these were only a representation. They extend one pair of wings toward each other, symbolizing a closed gate. The other pair of wings is extended upward toward heaven, portraying an open gate. The same Hebrew word, *kanaph*, is translated elsewhere as “skirt” or “border” and used in the context of a sheltering authority, for example, in laws forbidding sexual relations with a father’s wife and in Ruth’s request for Boaz to cover her.¹⁰⁷ I suspect their purpose here is to show that only in submission to God’s ordained authority will our prayers be favorably received in heaven. The wings represent the authority and protection of God as well as the angels’ function as gatekeepers to God’s throne.

Exodus 25:21

...the mercy seat above upon the ark... The covering is above the testimony, indicating that the covering of the Messiah—the blood of Yeshua—is superior to the written Law. Mercy must always be superior to judgment, especially in the heart of a father. He is the lawgiver and judge of his family, but all under the merciful covering of the authority granted him by the Creator.

Exodus 25:22

...I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat... This reinforces the idea that the two cherubim are somehow guardians of the prayer channel between God and mankind. It also reinforces Paul’s description of the hierarchical authority from Father God to Yeshua to Husband to Wife.

Exodus 25:23

...a table of shittim wood... The table primarily represents the Heavenly Son, but serves as a model for earthly firstborn sons. Once more, shittim or acacia wood represents humanity or the flesh.

Exodus 25:24

...overlay it with pure gold... Like the gold which covered the Ark, this gold represents purity and righteousness. As the father’s heir and lieutenant, the firstborn

¹⁰⁶ There are other legitimate spiritual authorities (e.g. a king, priest, or teacher) that God might place over a man, but none of these are omnipresent institutions or inherent in the created state of a man.

¹⁰⁷ *King James Concordance*. Ed. Rick Meyers. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

son must be pure and righteous. The importance of the firstborn's worthiness is underscored by the many firstborn sons who were displaced in Scripture: Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, and others. Without the pure gold covering of righteous behavior, a firstborn son may rightly be replaced by a younger sibling.

...a crown of gold round about. In the absence of the father, the son is to take charge of the family. He is to be his father's ambassador to the rest of the world, his operations manager, his lieutenant, and his strength, an extension of his influence.

Exodus 25:27

...shall the rings be for places of the staves... Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church. These staves are the human supports of the firstborn son. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure their son has strong support in the form of a wife and family of his own. It is also their responsibility to teach him to govern his family with justice and mercy in emulation of the Messiah.

Exodus 25:28

...that the table may be borne with them. A good wife and children are as much a part of the success of a son as they are for his father. As with sons, it is the parents' responsibility to bring up their daughters so that they will be capable of competently supporting their husbands.

Exodus 25:29

And thou shalt make the dishes thereof... The table is the Messiah, the firstborn of the resurrection and the only begotten of God. We are the other articles on the table. Beyond the obvious equation of the twelve loaves to the twelve tribes of Israel and the Messiah, who is the bread of life, I do not know how to assign meaning to the individual articles.

Exodus 25:31

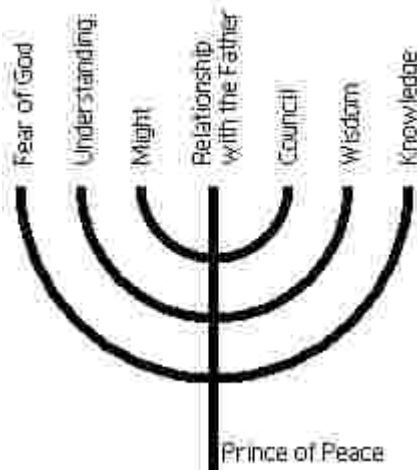
And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold... The Menorah is symbolic of the Holy Spirit who often exemplifies the feminine role, though he is not female. A mother gives light, teaching, and comfort to her family just as the Spirit gives light, teaching, and comfort to God's people. I am not sure what to make of the absence of *shittim* wood in the Menorah. Does it mean that a complete emulation of the Holy Spirit is not humanly possible? Or does it indicate the Holy Spirit's lack of fleshly existence or the disconnect between the Spirit's masculinity and the woman's femininity?

Exodus 25:32

And six branches shall come out of the side of it... The Spirit is a counselor, and so should a mother be. The seven lamps of the Menorah represent a plan toward a right relationship with the Heavenly Father, and the task of a mother is to keep her

children in a right relationship with their earthly father. The Holy Spirit can also be understood as seven individual, lesser spirits that combine to make up the whole. Like the stems of the Menorah that branch out from the center in sets of two, they are paired in an intimate set of relationships that will lead you to a perfect relationship with Yahweh in the center lamp. The first lamp is the Fear of Yahweh. It is the beginning of Knowledge, which is the seventh lamp on the opposite side. The second lamp is Understanding, which leads to and is moderated by the sixth lamp of Wisdom. The third lamp is Might, which can be moderated by good Council, which is the fifth lamp. In the center is a right relationship with Yahweh, or the Spirit of Yahweh. We have detailed information about only one person who had such a Right Relationship, and in Isaiah 11, he is the central Branch that grows from the root of Jesse. “And the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him [the central stem of the Menorah], the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Yahweh.” This interpretation is supported by some of the Proverbs, Isaiah 11, and Revelation 1:4.¹⁰⁸

Table 3: The Menorah as seven spirits or characteristics.



Exodus 25:33

...bowls made like almonds... The almond is an emblem of the High Priest whose dual function is to teach the people the ways of God and to petition God on behalf of the people. The almond-shaped bowls are the source of the Menorah’s light, and light indicates the dispensing of knowledge and truth. A mother is to teach her children in the ways of their father, and she is to be an intercessor to the father

¹⁰⁸ I first heard of the link between the seven branches and the spirits of Isaiah 11 in a midrash at a messianic fellowship. I have since seen hints of this idea from other sources, including the writings of John D. Garr and of Nancy Missler.

on behalf of her children. By doing so, she will bring light, truth, and honesty into her family.

In the traditional Jewish ceremony of Erev Shabbat, performed before the evening meal every Friday at the onset of the Sabbath, the mother (or the eldest woman at the table) lights the two Shabbat candles for the same reason: partly as proof of her adequacy as a provider for her family, and partly because as one woman bore the light of the world, so too do all women bring light into their homes.

Exodus 25:35-36

...one beaten work of pure gold. The six side branches of the Menorah were assembled in sets of two, one on the left and one on the right. The pairs of branches were made out of a single piece of gold with a ring in the center connecting it to the stem. Each pair represents a pair of inextricably linked character traits (See verse 32.), and each side balances the other. The fear of God is balanced against knowledge of God's promises and love. Understanding of God's creation is balanced against wisdom in its proper use. Strength is moderated by good council. These spirits only engender a right relationship with God if they are in proper union and order. If strength is not complemented by council, then they separately beget tyranny and manipulation. If worldly understanding is not united with wisdom, then they separately beget pride and foolishness. If fear is not united with knowledge, then they separately beget legalism and licentiousness.

In searching for a mate, you should aim to find your complement, someone who can moderate your excesses and supplement your weaknesses. Husband and wife should be each other's *ezer kenegdo*. It takes time to achieve that kind of balance. When you are young you contain the seed of a good husband or wife. I have often heard complaints from people who say they were not ready for marriage, but nobody ever is. Parents must prepare their children as well as they can, but, as when a soldier first encounters combat, no training is ever completely sufficient for the event. You will never be truly ready for marriage until you have already been married for many years. This is why the gold of the Tabernacle could not be cast directly into the correct form. It had to be beaten into shape by extended stress and trauma. We learn to love by being placed in situations in which love is difficult. Be grateful for disagreements in your marriage (But do not seek them out or promote them!), for without conflict you would never learn resolution, and you would never realize the completeness that God intends for you.

Exodus 25:37

...that they may give light over against it. Like the church who is to be a light to the world, a mother gives light to her family. She teaches them God's law and their father's law through her instruction and example.

Exodus 25:38

...the tongs...and the snuffdishes... The tongs and snuffdishes were used to maintain the wicks of the Menorah, and like it, they were made of pure gold. A husband must never discipline his wife with cruelty, abuse, or hypocrisy. His teaching, guidance, and discipline must always be pure and righteous, never tainted by sin. His authority over her is not for his own pleasure, but for the proper governance of his house. Any correction he might offer, therefore, must be to that end, to help her achieve her role as light to her family.

Exodus 26:1

...ten curtains of fine twined linen... These ten curtains were made by men and represent the role of men in covering their families. They also represent the role of men united in covering their people. Jewish tradition says that a minimum of ten men is required to form a people. When you see the *tallit*-wearing men gathered together for prayer at the start of the service in a Jewish or Messianic congregation, picture the tent of meeting standing in the center of the camp under the ten linen curtains.

Exodus 26:7

...goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle. The Hebrew word used for tabernacle is *mishkan*, and is the same word used elsewhere for the tents in which people lived. Goats' hair was a very common material for making such tents. See my comments on Exodus 35:26 for more details on these curtains.

Exodus 26:35

...set the table without the vail... I believe the headcovering that Paul instructs women to wear is analogous to the veil that separated the Ark from the Table and the Menorah. It is a symbol of the authority and sanctity of the role of the father as the lawgiver of his family.

Tetzaveh: Exodus 27:20-30:10

Exodus 27:20

...pure olive oil... The people of Israel were commanded to supply the Menorah with pure olive oil created just for that purpose. Fruit, especially olive trees and grape vines are often used in Scripture to represent people and offspring. If the Menorah can serve as a model for wives and mothers, then this command could also be interpreted to mean that God requires parents to provide families with pure, whole wives and mothers. It is not possible to teach a person everything she needs to know for life before she marries. There are things you can only learn with long years of practice. However, the essentials of running a house, carrying on human relationships, and particularly maintaining one's virtue are prerequisites to leaving one house to create a new one. It is a mother's and father's task to guard and prepare their daughters to become wives and mothers in their turn.

Exodus 27:21

...Aaron and his sons shall order it... Not Aaron and his daughters, but Aaron and his sons. There are certainly times when righteous women can and should be in positions of authority, but the example repeatedly given by God is that, under all normal circumstances, men are to order the government, the congregation, and their families.

Exodus 28:9

And thou shalt take two onyx stones... One stone for each of God's brides, Israel and Judah.

Exodus 28:11

...thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. The Messiah's brides are to be pure, but they cannot be pure in themselves. It is their attachment to the Messiah and his acting in them that purifies them.

Exodus 28:12

...Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial. Every person is responsible for his own actions, and the high priest is answerable to God for his actions in shepherding God's people. If the people fail spiritually, it is probable that the high priest had some hand in that. The same principle holds true in families. Fathers are responsible for the good and bad management of their families.

Exodus 28:29

...the breastplate of judgment upon his heart... The high priest was to wear the breastplate of judgment over his heart to remind him to temper his judgments with mercy. Fathers should follow this example in the governance of their families.

Exodus 28:33-35

A golden bell and a pomegranate... Pomegranates, because of their many seeds, have always been symbols of fertility, and bells are symbols of the Spirit. Although the High Priest stands for the Messiah, this is not an indication that the Messiah was married and fathered children. It means that a relationship with the Messiah will bear spiritual fruit. Those who attach themselves to him will produce fruit (in the form of repented sinners or some other benefit to the body) or they will wither and die, much as a people who fail to reproduce.

Exodus 29:12

...blood of the bullock...upon the horns of the altar... The bull symbolizes strength and power. The Hebrew word translated as “bullock” is *par*, which is very similar to *para*, a verb meaning to be fruitful.¹⁰⁹ The horns of the altar graphically represent the fruitfulness of masculinity. The material of the altar, bronze, symbolizes judgment.

Sons are an extension and a multiplication of a man’s strength. Through sons, he exercises his authority over a wider jurisdiction and becomes a judge of his people. They enact his judgments over his own people as well as over his enemies.

¹⁰⁹ Strong, *Definitions*.

Ki Tisa: Exodus 30:11-34:35

Exodus 30:12

...every man a ransom for his soul... Although the King James translators chose to put “children” here instead of “sons,” the remainder of the text is clear that males are intended. This tax was only levied against men who were able to fight. No women or children were included. No doubt, the resulting count of half-shekels was used to assign the leaders of tens, hundreds, and so forth, as well as to estimate the nation’s fighting strength. Women and children were not counted, because they did not participate in combat except in the most extreme circumstances. The half-shekel was silver, representing the blood of the donator. It was a statement of patriotism, of willingness to defend Israel to the death if required.

Exodus 30:20

When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation... Bronze represents judgment, and the priests were to wash in the bronze basin before ministering before God on behalf of the people. This is the same principle in effect when Peter wrote that “judgment must begin at the house of God.” The more authority one has, the more responsibility. A husband and father must undergo judgment and purification before he is fully competent to judge and purify his family.

Exodus 31:2

I have called by name Bezaleel... His name means “in the shadow of God.”¹¹⁰ Evidently, Bezaleel relied on God for his protection rather than on his father-in-law as Lamech and Esau did. It is a husband’s place to be the protector of his family, not the protected. He should not marry for privilege or power, but keep his faith in the Creator instead.

Exodus 31:6

...I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach... Aholiab means “tent of his father,” and Ahisamach means “brother of support.” A man’s authority and family associations are not to be drawn from his wife’s family, but from his father’s. After God, his power comes from his blood kin. When a woman marries, she must leave her family behind and join her husband’s.

...that they make all that I have commanded thee. With faith in God and sound family structure, a man can build a strong and lasting house.

¹¹⁰ Strong, *Definitions*.

Exodus 32:2

...which are in the ears of your wives... Ear and nose rings were often a symbol of allegiance or belonging, and were used as bridal currency. The Israelites had looted much more gold from Egypt than just earrings. He could have demanded their gold dishes or chains or figurines. Idol worship is akin to adultery. In telling them to break this outward symbol of association, I wonder if Aaron meant to draw their attention to the fact that worshipping an idol would break their association with Yahweh.

Exodus 32:3

And all the people... All the people—men and women—participated in this rebellion to some extent, and all the people bore the consequences.

Exodus 32:5

To morrow is a feast to the LORD. Aaron erected an idol and claimed he did it in honor of God. I have seen a married woman frequent bars and flirt with strange men, while claiming she did so for her husband's benefit, to motivate him to greater manliness. The absurdity of such a scheme is apparent to every unbiased observer, yet she will likely always remain self-deceived of her own motives. God's response to Israel's idolatry certainly involved jealousy, but not more love. Her punishment was severe.

Exodus 32:11-14

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak... There are many reasons why a man should always deal with his wife in love. Not least among them is the effect that such treatment has on those who witness it. A major complaint leveled by radical feminists against marriage is the rampant abuse of wives by their husbands. However exaggerated the complaint might be, those relatively few men who are indeed abusive tend to overshadow the many who are not. In order to maintain in general society an enduring respect for marriage, men of good character must be exemplary in their marriages. They must incontestably be seen as the kind and merciful men they are so that the lies of feminism will also be manifest.

Exodus 32:19

...and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. According to one Jewish tradition, Moses broke the stone tablets in order to protect Israel from too severe a punishment. He destroyed the written covenant in order to provide Israel with plausible deniability for their idolatry. In "Tract Aboth" of the *Babylonian Talmud*,

Said R. Jose the Galilean: I will explain this with a parable. A king said to his ambassador: "Go, betroth to me a maiden who is

beautiful, chaste, and of pleasing manners.” The ambassador went and betrothed such to him. Soon he found that she acted the harlot. The ambassador was in a predicament. “What is to be done? If I give her the marriage contract now, I may subject her to capital punishment. No,” he said, “I will tear the marriage contract and thereby release her from my master and save her.” So Moses the upright said, as stated above: “Rather will I seize and break them (the tables) and save the Israelites by enabling them, in case they should be charged with idolatry, to say: ‘Where are the tables? They did not exist at all.’”¹¹¹

In God’s law, betrothal is as certain as marriage, and a promised virgin who fornicates is guilty of adultery. When Joseph first learned of Mary’s pregnancy, he thought to follow the same tack that Moses took at Sinai, putting Mary away quietly as if to pretend there had never even been a betrothal. The alternative would have been much less than loving.

Exodus 32:20-35

...and made the children of Israel drink of it. Moses forced the Israelites to undergo the *Sotah*, the trial of jealousy, in which a wife suspected of adultery would drink a potion made up of water, dirt from the Tabernacle floor, and the ink of a written curse.

Whosoever hath sinned against me... The potion of the *Sotah* is harmless to an innocent woman, but deadly to the guilty.

...him will I blot out of my book. The curse of the *Sotah* was written on a scroll then scraped into a jar of water. Those who are found guilty are removed from the Book of Life and take this curse into themselves. For those who are innocent, the handwriting of ordinances against the accused is nailed to the cross, while their names are permanently inscribed to life.

Although Israel’s punishment was hard, it was a thousand times less severe than it justly could have been. God chose to ignore their sins, and he ultimately ascribed his own son’s innocence to them. Yeshua chose to suffer for their sakes and for ours, and we husbands were instructed by Paul to love our wives as the Messiah loved his people. Since we are sinners as surely as they, mercy is even more in order.

Exodus 33:2

...and I will drive out the Canaanite... Although generosity to those less fortunate is imperative, a man should be very careful whose needs he places before those of his family. Tyrants, the reprobate, the Canaanite—it is no sin to drive them out for the material benefit of one’s family. Only be careful that you are not using

¹¹¹ “Tract Aboth,” *Babylonian Talmud, Book Five*. Trans. Michael L. Rodkinson. (Internet Sacred Text Archive, 1918, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t05/abo05.htm>. Accessed 05 February 2009.)

another man's sin as an excuse for injustice. Recall the last sentence in the previous paragraph: "Since we are sinners as surely as they..."

Exodus 33:3

Unto a land flowing with milk and honey... God provided abundant blessings to Israel. It is right for a man to work for his family's material benefit. Wealth is a blessing, and leaving wealth to one's children is doubly so.

...lest I consume thee in the way. God created men to be stronger and more aggressive than women so that we would be more able to fill our role as protector and ruler of our families. Like all powerful tools, however, our greater strength carries a certain responsibility to be aware and cautious of its use and potential for abuse. Exercise moderation and control in all things, but especially in judgment and anger.

Exodus 33:5

...put off thy ornaments from thee... God did not need the Israelites to remove their jewelry and Sunday best before he could decide their fate. God is not distracted or fooled by outward trappings. We, however, are easily confused and self-deceived. On one level there are the creatures we really are, on another are the creatures we believe we are, and on yet another are the creatures we pretend to be. Makeup, jewelry, cars, degrees, titles, and ornaments of all kinds enable us to play an elaborate game of make-believe that inhibits honest interaction with God and the world around us. For husband and wife to communicate effectively they must first strip off their layers of artificiality as well as those more natural aspects of their own character that also create barriers. If husbands desire effective communications with their wives, they have to learn to listen patiently, resisting the urge to fix every problem. If wives desire uninhibited communications with their husbands, they have to set aside wiles and manipulations, dealing honestly and forthrightly.

Exodus 33:7

...afar off from the camp... Although the Tabernacle was not unclean, Moses' reason for placing it so far outside the camp was not unlike the reason God commanded separation from those things that are unclean. Its presence was dangerous to the people. The power of God was such that too close a proximity could—and sometimes did—cost people their lives.

Exodus 33:16

...so shall we be separated... A husband must avoid shaming his wife in public. Instead they should present a united front to the rest of the world, who will know that he is on her side, that he is her protector and provider. Between her chastity and modesty and his loyalty, everyone who sees will know that she is separate from all the other women in the world and belongs to a man of moral substance.

Exodus 33:17

...for thou has found grace in my sight... Israel's obedience to God was not predicated on any favor in return. God expected Israel to obey whether he went with them or not. He gave his blessings, on the other hand, for cause. He accompanied them across the desert, because they found favor in his eyes. Likewise, a wife's obedience to her husband must never depend on his benevolent behavior toward her. She is bound to obey him whether or not she loves him, respects him, or is treated well by him. A good husband will reward his wife accordingly and abundantly, praising her and standing with her publicly. A truly wise husband will praise and stand by his wife even when she is not perfectly obedient, knowing full well that neither is he perfectly providential. When she is overcome by inevitable feelings of resentment or rebellion, his gracious behavior might pull her back.

Exodus 34:12

...lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee. There is nothing inherently wrong in cooperating with unbelievers. God said not to make covenants (e.g. binding agreements of marriage, trade, or friendship) with them, because temptations to join in their idolatry would inevitably follow. The same principle holds true in marriage. There is nothing inherently wrong with a woman working with and even being friends with men who are neither her husband nor another close relative, but all such relationships should be kept casual. She should not enter binding business partnerships with other men or form other very close associations with them. Such things are not adulterous in themselves, but inevitably lead to temptations. Even if she successfully resists every temptation, the appearance of impropriety can often be as damaging to her reputation in the community and to her relationship with her husband.

Exodus 34:16

...and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. If a believer marries another believer, over time the two will adopt each other's habits. A believer who marries a nonbeliever cannot avoid corruption of his spiritual standards.

Since the woman is to leave her own people and adopt her husband's family and religion as her own, a man might tell himself that there is little danger in marrying an unbeliever. She will become a believer upon marriage. Obviously faith is not so artificial. It is true that faith often follows practice, but it is not a given, and it always takes time. God specifically commanded Israel not to allow their sons to marry the daughters of pagans, because they cannot leave behind all they believe so easily. Conversion to God's religion and adoption into Israel should come first and the potential bride should be given time to internalize her new life before being eligible for marriage to a son of Israel.

Exodus 34:17

Thou shalt make thee no molten gods. An idol is not a living thing. It is merely stone or wood or metal, yet the true God has said we should never make one. Even simulating the worship of another god or fantasizing about doing so is tantamount to the act itself and is equally sinful. A wife must never fawn over other men or fantasize about them or flirt with them. Such things are almost as bad as actual adultery.

Exodus 34:18

The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. The feast of unleavened bread commemorates the early harvest and the redemption of God's bride from slavery in Egypt. It is a celebration of God's providence and protection. This command immediately follows a proscription against making molten gods, because idolatry demonstrates a lack of faith in him. It is a declaration of his inadequacy to our needs just as a wife mooning over a handsome stranger is a declaration of the inadequacy of her husband. Appreciation of beauty is good. Lust and fantasy are adulterous.

Exodus 34:20

All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. The firstborn of all man and animal belongs to God, but the firstborn of men and of unclean animals are to be redeemed. Firstborn sons are redeemed by their fathers. Although all of a man's children are his and are loved by him, his firstborn son is his primary lieutenant and an extension of his strength over his other children and into the world outside of the family. He is also the portion God specifically claims for his own.

Exodus 34:23

...shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD... Only males were required to appear before God, because only males were the heads of houses. Every male represented a potential house within Israel.

Exodus 34:24

For I will cast out the nations before thee... Although it is never right to take unfair advantage of others or to treat the innocent unjustly, it is not wrong to work for the financial advantage of your own family. Competition is an important part of God's natural law, and wealth is a legitimate benefit of effective competition.

Exodus 34:33-35

...he put a veil on his face. Coverings represent authority and can be used to advertise authority, to hide one's own glory, or to display submission to the authority of another. Worn on the shoulders, a covering represents authority delegated from a higher power. Worn over the head, it represents submission to that

authority. Moses, more than other men, bore the image of God. His face re-radiated the glory of God, so when he spoke God's words and when he communed with God, he wore nothing on his head. Instead he pulled his covering down over his shoulders, so that the congregation of Israel would know that he spoke with authority, and so that he would not insult God by hiding as if behind the authority of a man. When Moses carried on the everyday business of living his life and running the camp, he wore the covering up over his head. Since his face so intensely radiated God's glory, he did not want the people to be distracted by it or to give him more reverence than he was due. Moses was the most humble man on earth, and his veil teaches us the proper exercise of humility. When he spoke for God, he displayed his authority and God's glory unabashedly. When he spoke for himself, he hid them so that he would not appear to be more than a man among other men.

Vayakhel: Exodus 35:1-38:20

Exodus 35:1-19

And Moses gathered all the congregation... Moses gathered men, women, and children together to hear the Torah. We all suffer as a result of each other's wickedness, but every individual is responsible for his own obedience to God. A man cannot be held responsible for his wife's sins, nor can a woman be held responsible for her husband's. He is responsible for how he loves and leads his wife, and she is responsible for how she respects and obeys her husband.

The coverings of the Tabernacle were made by both men and women. Men brought the dyes, men and women together brought the raw materials; women spun the threads; men weaved the linen. Either sex alone cannot make a complete family or nation. God requires both—as they require each other—to function. The linen curtains are not more important than the hair curtains or skin coverings. Like any ordered machine, every part is required for the functioning of the whole. If a single gear is missing from a clock, then it no longer keeps time. It likely does nothing useful at all. Although there is a definite hierarchy of authority within mankind, man is not more important than woman to God's plans, because without either one, those plans come to naught.

Exodus 35:5

...whosoever is of a willing heart... God invited every individual—man, woman, and child—to donate the materials of the Tabernacle: the metals, fabrics, oil, spices, and gems, all of the things that, together, symbolize a complete and balanced child of God. They also symbolize the roles of husband, wife, and children in a family. God wanted free-will offerings, because he does not force us to become the people he wants us to be.

A man cannot be forced to love his wife; he must choose to love her. She can manipulate him and cajole him, but the result is not real love. It is form without substance. Likewise, a woman cannot be forced to submit to her husband's rule. A man can certainly try to force his wife to submit, but he will fail. He can beat her, threaten her, or manipulate her, but he will never have true submission from the heart. Either she will resist to the point at which he is no longer willing to keep her as his wife or else she will become someone else, someone much less than the woman he married.

Exodus 35:10

And every wise hearted among you shall come... This verse does not express a command, but a statement of fact. God told Israel to make the things of the Tabernacle, but he had not singled out any individual craftsmen besides Bezaleel and Aholiab. Here God said that the wise will obey him. The unwise will not. A

wise wife does not need to be prodded to obey her husband. She does so, because she knows that it is right. Like the wise craftsmen, she will go beyond the bare minimum of submission, and will actively seek the pleasure and praise of her husband and family. For example, she will do more than provide food and clothing for her children. She will ensure that their food is well balanced and well prepared and that their clothing is attractive, well-fitted, and durable.

Exodus 35:22

And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought...jewels of gold... Gold represents righteousness. No sex has a monopoly on righteousness, although its exact form may differ from one to the other. Women are accountable to God for their own obedience to his commands, and so are men.

Exodus 35:23

And every man, with whom was found... I am sure that women also brought these things, but the Torah singles out men. I believe there is a spiritual element to these fabrics and skins that is peculiar to men. Perhaps it is because all of these things are coverings by nature. Men are the spiritual authorities which cover their families.

Exodus 35:24

Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass... As with gold, the Torah says that both men and women brought silver and brass, redemption and judgment. Although God deals with families, tribes, and nations, eternal salvation is only available to the individual. Each person is redeemed or judged apart from all others.

...every man, with whom was found shittim wood... Yet only the men are said to have brought shittim, although I have no doubt that women brought it as well. This might be to say that men are primarily—though not solely—responsible for the development of character in their families. They ensure that the Torah is taught and kept in their houses. They mete out reward and punishment.

Exodus 35:25

And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands... The men brought the blue, purple, and scarlet, and the women spun the raw material into thread, which they delivered for use in the Tabernacle. These were not necessarily technically skillful women, but “wise-hearted.”

“Behind every great man is a great woman” is more than a platitude. A man is to cover his family, but he cannot do so effectively without the active cooperation of his wife. The wisdom of a good woman is a force multiplier on the power and coverage of her husband. He is to turn the linen into curtains, but without his wife to assist him, the cloth is plain and incomplete.

Exodus 35:26

...whose heart stirred them up in wisdom... The rabbis teach that this phrase means these women spun the goats' hair straight off the back of the goats. While that would certainly be a trick for the wise, I suspect it to be a tale of old wives. Remember that there were eleven curtains made of the goats' hair. Eleven is one more than ten and represents a mastery of God's Law that goes a step beyond the letter carved in stone. Goats' hair was a very common material used in the construction of the tents of desert nomads and probably represents the building of a house. (By "house" I do not mean a structure of stone or wood, but an organization of people centered on a father.) The implication is that a woman whose heart longs for wisdom can gain it through the faithful application and mastery of Torah. Her obedience and her growing wisdom will help her to contribute to a solid structure for her husband's house. She adds a dimension to her husband's rule that would be missed if he ruled alone.

Exodus 35:29

...every man and woman, whose heart made them willing... Service to God is not reserved for men. Although leadership positions are normally, though not absolutely, to be held by men, women should serve where they are capable and willing. This includes service to the Temple, the Church, fellow believers, the sick, the homeless, and anyone else who could use their kindnesses.

Notice that no one was to be forced to serve beyond giving a tithe and a few other specific commands. Husbands and wives have certain obligations, but the bare minimums cannot make for a healthy and happy home. There are many things that a husband should do for his wife and that a wife should do for her husband, but those things cannot be forced: saying "I love you," fixing a favorite meal, giving flowers or a massage or a love note. These things must be done willingly and joyfully to be effective.

...which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses. Only Moses was commanded to make these things. The people of Israel were to assist him as they were willing. God assigned to Adam the task of tending the garden, and he made Eve to assist him in that task. However, God did not command Eve. Although she was created to serve Adam, her submission to him must be willing. God told her that she would constantly struggle with a desire to rule her husband, and that she could only win out if she made a concerted effort to do so. The same is true of every woman. Every woman is created to serve her husband, but she must consciously and actively choose to submit to him.

Exodus 36:6

Let neither man nor woman make any more work... Enthusiastic service of a husband toward his wife or the other way around is wonderful. Truly blessed is the man who must instruct his wife to serve him less. However, overly or

disproportionately enthusiastic service can be harmful. Such can breed resentment or complacency or can lead to the neglect of some other need.

Exodus 36:7

...the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work... We have in us everything necessary to fulfill God's commands in our relationships. In fact, we have an over-abundance of personal resources if we choose to employ it. We have the potential to provide a healthy and happy home for our mates and our families with plenty to spare for tending the sick, inviting the sojourner, feeding and clothing the poor, and visiting the imprisoned.

Exodus 36:8-19

After contemplating this passage—and its parallel earlier in Exodus—at great length, it became apparent to me that the linen curtain was a form of *tallit* representing the covering of men, while the goats' hair curtain represented the domestic role of women. However, I was confused by their relative positions. Why should the hair curtain be placed above the linen curtain when it is clear that the man is to cover the woman? My mistake was in assuming they were oriented toward the sky with the earth beneath. They are actually oriented toward God who dwells *within* the Tabernacle. The man's purpose in covering his wife is not to establish a higher or dominant position, but to protect her. He must always place himself (and she must always allow him to do so) between her and God. This protection is not necessary because God harbors any particular animosity towards women. It is necessary for the same reason that a furnace attendant wears protective clothing. Apart from the impropriety of exposing man's glory in the presence of God, I believe there is something about direct exposure to God's glory that is harmful to a woman. If she prays with her head uncovered, her prayers might be hindered by the cherubim of the throne room (depicted on the linen curtains and the veil before the Ark). If she prophesies with her head uncovered, she might be relaying words from some other source.

Exodus 36:8

And every wise hearted man among them... While the wise-hearted women spun the thread and goats' hair, the wise-hearted men wove the thread into fabric. A woman provides her husband with children, the raw materials with which he builds his house. There were ten curtains of the linen cover, demonstrating that it is a husband's and father's place to establish order and the rule of law within his house. The colors of the linen indicate a well-rounded instruction in trade (things of the earth), torah (things of heaven), and relationships (where heaven and earth intersect). The white linen represents purity, wholeness, holiness, and restoration. Crimson represents blood, corporeality, sensuality, earth, the body, and woman. Blue represents heaven, spirituality, torah, priesthood, the spirit, and man. Purple

represents royalty, Messiah, relationship, union of divine and mundane, the soul, and the firstborn son.

Table 4: Symbolism of colors in the linen

Color	Abstract Representation	Domain
White	Purity, wholeness, holiness, and restoration	All things in perfect harmony
Crimson	Blood, corporeality, sensuality, earth, body, and woman	Trade and things of the earth
Blue	Heaven, spirituality, torah, priesthood, spirit, and man	Torah and things of heaven
Purple	Royalty, Messiah, relationship, union of divine and mundane, the soul, and the Firstborn.	Relationships and the intersection of heaven and earth.

Exodus 36:9

The length of one curtain... Four stands for the Messiah. Twenty-eight is four times seven and might represent the perfection of Messiah. Each of the curtains was to be four cubits wide by twenty-eight cubits long. Although we are all keenly aware that no mere man can hope to compare with the purity and wisdom of Yeshua, it is our goals to become more like him in every way. Paul told us that husbands are to love their wives as the Messiah loved the Church. That is one way among several in which all husbands must aspire to cover their wives.

The curtains were all of one size. The exact working of every marriage and every husband-wife relationship will necessarily be different, but the general structure should be essentially the same. The man's spiritual authority over his house is delegated by God and is not subject to income, health, or other earthly considerations.

Exodus 36:10

And he coupled the five curtains one unto another... Five represents the Torah and ten is the Ten Commandments. If the Torah could be described as a building, the Ten Commandments could be thought of as the central room, the Torah of Torahs, much as the Holy of Holies is the focus of the Tabernacle. There are ten curtains, which represents the role of a father in creating *halakha*¹¹² for his house. He must not order his house by whim, but by Torah. God is the architect of humanity and families, and fathers are only the laborers who follow his blueprints.

¹¹² *Halakha* (pronounced hah-lah-khah) is a Hebrew word that means "walking out". It is used to describe how a particular group or congregation walks out the Torah in their real lives.

Exodus 36:11-13

...loops of blue...fifty loops...fifty taches of gold... The fifty blue loops and the fifty gold clasps stand for the giving of Torah at Sinai and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Jerusalem. God gave these things to all of humanity, but families receive them through fathers. Fathers are to be united in the government of their houses and of the people of God through the Torah and the Spirit.

Exodus 36:14

Eleven curtains he made them. Eleven represents a step beyond Torah. A man by himself can tend to interpret Torah too severely and should be tempered by a feminine perspective. Be careful not to take this concept too far as the feminists do. Woman without man devolves into animalistic sensualism, with every decision based in emotion, motivated by the heart.

Exodus 36:16

...five curtains...and six curtains... Five is the number of God's Law, and six is the number of man's law. Women are to rule their houses according to torah as well as by the *halakha* set by their husbands.

Exodus 36:17-18

And he made fifty loops...fifty taches of brass... As components of the Tabernacle approach the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, they increase in rarity. Brass becomes silver, and silver becomes gold. Metaphorically, judgment leads to redemption, and redemption leads to righteousness. The number fifty indicates that these passages are addressing the giving of Torah and the Spirit. The use of brass is curious in that silver was skipped altogether (The previously described taches were gold.), but exactly what we should understand from its use on the goats' hair curtains I cannot even guess.

Exodus 36:19

A covering for the tent... As the Tabernacle layers recede from God, they become more and more humble. Elaborately decorated linen is covered by wool, which is covered by rams' skin, which is covered by the skin of an unclean animal. This is the same pattern evident in humanity. Those men who were directly created by God in his image—Adam and Yeshua—are the most perfect specimens of humanity. Eve was a copy of Adam, Seth was a copy of Adam and Eve, his children were copies of him, and so on. With each copy, we lose something of that original image, becoming more degraded, weaker, and stupider.

The regression of coverings is also indicative of the authority relationship between a man and his wife as well as between each generation. The man is the head of his house, and a mother is the head of her young children.

Exodus 36:20-38:20

See my comments on chapters 25 through 29.

Exodus 38:8

...of the looking glasses of the women assembling... In Isaiah 3, the terrible judgment inflicted upon Israel is due in large part to the prideful feminism and physical vanity of women. It is to their credit that women are also frequently the first to respond in repentance. Note that these mirrors were donated by women who assembled themselves at the Tabernacle. In Isaiah 4:1, the first step toward healing is taken by women who humble themselves, voluntarily placing themselves under the authority of a husband without demanding any of those things which would normally be their due in marriage. The laver of brass, made from the implements of vanity, is symbolic of the repentance and cleansing of women prior to a general return of the people to righteousness.

Pekudei: Exodus 38:21-40:38**Exodus 38:21-39:43**

See my comments on chapters 25 through 29.

LEVITICUS – *Vayikra*

Vayikra: Leviticus 1:1-6:7

Leviticus 1:4

...to make atonement for him. The Hebrew word for “to make atonement,” *kafar*, is the same as that used for “to pitch” in Genesis 6:14 and means “to cover.” Coverings of all kinds are for protection or are emblems of delegated authority. In this case, the man covers the head of the animal with his hand to depute his guilt, and then the animal’s blood is described as a covering for the man. Atonement hides our sin from God so that we are able to approach him without being destroyed.

Table 5: Coverings used to shield from a dangerous power.

Object	Covering	Danger
Noah and family	Pitch on the Ark	Wrath of God manifested in the Flood
Torah (by analogy, man)	Mercy Seat (by analogy, Yeshua)	Direct presence of God
Sinful man	Blood	Direct presence of God
Woman	Veil (as a sign of her husband's or father's authority)	Cherubim who guard God's throne

Leviticus 3:1

...whether it be male or female... A peace offering is made to express thanks to God for some blessing. It also helps engender peaceful relations within communities. Peace offerings were occasions for parties, as the major part of the slaughtered animal was given back to the presenter. Thanks to God is expressed through service to one’s neighbors. It is always given as a free-will offering and can be given by anyone at any time.

A peace offering animal may be either male or female because service to God’s people can be performed by male or female. The several deaconesses in the New Testament writings are examples of women in service. They were not in leadership positions; they did not bear titles or honors. They provided sleeping quarters for traveling apostles, served meals, mended clothes, and tended to the elderly. Sometimes they prayed or prophesied. These essential roles are not necessarily limited to a particular sex or class of believer, but women tend to fulfill them better than men due to their feminine nature as comforters and counselors instead of warriors and kings.

Leviticus 3:2

And Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar...

Although anyone can bring a peace offering, and the animal can be male or female, only the priests are permitted to actually sprinkle the blood and burn the fat on the altar. Any believer, male or female, can offer service to God, but some specific tasks, such as the offering of blood sacrifices, are reserved. Only Aaronic priests, the Cohanim, may offer sacrifices on the altar in Jerusalem. Under normal circumstances, only men may be pastors, and only men may be spiritual teachers of other men.

Leviticus 4:1-35

If a soul shall sin through ignorance... The descending glory of these sacrifices mirrors that of the Tabernacle coverings. The high priest brings a young bull. The nation also brings a bull. A ruler brings a male goat. Finally a citizen brings a female goat or lamb. Each authority over the petitioner acts as a degree of atonement in addition to the sacrifice. Winston Churchill said, "The price of greatness is responsibility."¹¹³ The higher one's authority, the greater is his sin and the more covering it requires. The line of authority portrayed here is High Priest > Nation/Elders > Ruler > Citizen. No doubt, the same principle holds true within families. God holds fathers and husbands to a higher degree of accountability because he gives them more authority. Their spiritual lives have a lower tolerance for error; their sins affect more people.

Leviticus 4:28

...a female without blemish... Although we frequently correlate glory with beauty, it is only one dimension of glory as the concept is used in Scripture. Political, spiritual, physical, and sexual power and authority are also elements of glory. By most scales, physical beauty being the most notable exception, men carry more glory than women. In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that a woman is even part of her husband's glory.

Leviticus 5:4

Or if a soul swear... Idle promises bring guilt, but not necessarily an obligation of fulfillment. The swearer must repent of his guilt when he learns of it. If he waits until the next day or to see what might happen, then he has affirmed his oath by his inaction. This means that one may not abrogate an oath if he only later learns of its unpleasant ramifications. I believe there are five instances in which this law applies:

1. A promise to do something, which you later discover is beyond your power to accomplish. Young lovers make pledges to follow one another to the ends of the earth or to do this or that. If they took time to consider

¹¹³ Winston Churchill, "The Price of Greatness Is Responsibility." (The Churchill Centre, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=424>. Accessed 23 March 2008.)

- their words, they would almost certainly realize their impossibility, but careful consideration is rarely a significant element of infatuation.
2. An accidental oath, such as an outburst made in sudden anger or joy. This is very similar to the previous case. We might say things in the heat of passion, argument, or surprise that we do not mean to be taken literally.
 3. A promise made in response to a misunderstanding. For example, if someone asks you to do one thing, you promise to do something else because you misheard them.
 4. A conflict between two mutually exclusive statements. We sometimes find ourselves in situations in which we have made conflicting commitments.
 5. An oath which you later realize would result in sin. If we have promised to deliver something that we later learn would require theft or injury, it is often better to break the oath.

This last case can be very difficult to judge. How to decide which sin is worse? A common wedding vow in monogamous cultures involves “forsaking all others.” A man is not biblically required to be either monogamous or polygynous¹¹⁴ except in a few exceptional circumstances—for example, if the brother of a married man dies childless, leaving a widow. It would be better if a man never made such a vow at all since it places him under the authority of his wife in some ways, but once the vow is made, he should not break it lightly. He may seek to be released (by his wife, by her father, or by whomever else as the case may be) from it, but he may not simply ignore it.

¹¹⁴ A man is normally not required to marry at all.

Tzav: Leviticus 6:8-8:36

Leviticus 6:22

And the priest of his sons that is anointed in his stead... A man's office and ministry is inherited by his son or, through his daughter if he has no sons, his son-in-law or else an adopted son, such as in the case of Elijah and Elisha. Daughters will inherit with their husbands. Leviticus is full of references to Aaron and his sons, but never Aaron and his daughters. A reasonable argument could be made that "sons" is used in the generic sense of "children," although that frequently is the intended meaning elsewhere.¹¹⁵ That use applied in this case does not hold out against serious scrutiny. The rules associated with the priesthood—that he must marry a woman of Israel, for example—preclude its occupation by women.

¹¹⁵ In Leviticus 7:34, for example, *ben* was translated as both "children" and "sons." Leviticus 10:14 indicates that "sons" should read "children."

Shmini: Leviticus 9:1-11:47

Leviticus 10:1-11

...which he commanded them not. When addressing feminism there is no passage more appropriate than Jeremiah 17:9. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Nadab and Abihu evidently accepted the maxim of today’s feminist rhetoric: “Listen to your heart.” I believe they meant well. They wanted to express their devotion to God in a dramatic way, but it is not man’s place to decide when, where, or how to worship God. A father does not allow his children to decide every way in which he will be served, though God does allow us a wide degree of latitude in showing our love for him. However, just as there are some tasks in a house which are only appropriate for more mature children and only appropriate at certain times and when done in certain manners, there are tasks in his kingdom which God has set apart with more specific guidelines.

He appointed men to be the heads of their wives and the spiritual coverings of their houses. When women attempt to take on those roles, they are more likely to be harmed than blessed. There are dangerous spiritual forces at work in the world. When our hearts lead us to actions contrary to Torah, they deceive us and leave us vulnerable to consequences which we might not foresee or attacks against which we are not prepared to defend. It is better to accept God’s design without understanding than to rely on your own understanding and be burned like Nadab and Abihu.

Since a prohibition of the use of alcohol by priests while on duty immediately follows this story, alcohol was probably a factor. The mind and the heart work like opposing muscles, one balancing and controlling the other. Normally one’s reason should moderate his heart, but alcohol, drugs, and mind-altering substances of all kinds can affect the judgment, allowing the heart to hold too much sway over actions. Be wary of medications, especially those with noticeable psychological effects.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this account is Moses’ instruction to Aaron and his remaining sons to not show grief or sympathy for the two dead men. Nadab and Abihu walked their own path. No one forced them to act outside the covering of their priestly office. They were not deceived by anything outside themselves, and no one else—not even alcohol—can accept any blame. When a wife consciously rejects her husband’s covering based solely on the feelings in her heart, whether under the influence of chemicals or not, she must accept the consequences of her own actions. Courts and other sympathizers who would blame her husband for her actions insult the woman by treating her as completely incapable of controlling herself, and they

¹¹⁶ Such medications are wildly over-prescribed, probably causing much more harm than good. I Kirsch, BJ Deacon, TB Huedo-Medina, A. Scoboria, TJ Moore, et al., “Initial Severity and Antidepressant Benefits: A Meta-Analysis of Data Submitted to the Food and Drug Administration.” *PLoS Medicine* Vol. 5, No. 2, e45 doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050045.

treat her husband unjustly. God will not hold them blameless who hold their own hearts higher than his Law.

Leviticus 10:14

...thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee... “Daughters” presumably includes the priest’s wife.¹¹⁷ Most commentators seem to assume so without comment, but I do not believe it should be accepted as given. Some rabbis believe that the daughter of a Cohen is holier than other women by virtue of her blood descent from Aaron—the same as his son. If that is so, then the wife of a priest would not be eligible to eat the wave offerings if she is not the daughter of another priest. I do not believe that to be correct. Tribal membership is determined patrilineally at birth. However, a woman joins the tribe of her husband in every other case. Ruth became a Jew because she married a Jew. The daughters of Zelophehad were required to marry within their own tribe so that their father’s possessions would not be inherited by another tribe. When a woman of Judah marries a Levite, she becomes a Levite. Men are to treat their daughters-in-law just as if they were their own daughters. Therefore, when God said that the daughter of a priest may eat the wave offering, he means the daughters-in-law as well as the daughters-in-blood.

Leviticus 11:7-8

...though he divide the hoof... The rabbis have taught that swine are the most unclean of all animals because they are deceptive. There is no way to tell whether it may be eaten by a simple visual examination. On the outside, it looks much like a ruminant. You must watch it carefully over a period of time to discern the truth. It is the only cloven-hoofed animal that does not chew its cud. The pig is like many people. They know how to speak and act in order to appear an honorable believer. Men marry women who manipulate them and eventually openly rebel, using threats and lawyers to cause great pain. Women are seduced by men who know the right words to say or just the right way to smile to control their hearts and blind their eyes. Eventually they are shown to be simple womanizers, sexual predators, or outright abusers. It is only through time, careful examination, and wise counsel that you can know the real person behind the façade. There are three tests that will weed out the majority of such people:

1. Is he a believer? This is the most difficult, but the most important test of all. Do not listen to words, but observe his actions. Is he kind? Does he go out of his way to help the needy? Is he respectful to his elders? Does he pray? Does he worship?

¹¹⁷ I find the lack of explicit mention of wives to be curious. I cannot help but wonder if God did not intend to draw a connection between this law and the prophecy of Leviticus 26:29, “And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.” It is an unsettling correlation to say the least. I do not know what we are supposed to learn from it. A judicial balancing, perhaps? The priests fed their children from the hypocritical sacrifices of the nation, so now the nation—or only the priests’ children—will suffer a sickeningly appropriate fate.

2. Do your parents approve? If you are a woman (but not a widow or divorcee), it is especially important that your father approves.
3. Do your congregational elders approve?

Notice that there is a common element in these tests. They take time and patience. They will be easier if you are both part of the same community and congregation. Passing these three tests is not a guarantee of marital bliss, but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Leviticus 11:29

...the weasel... I have heard a myth to the effect that weasels are unclean because they procreate through oral sex or because they give birth through the mouth. It is simply a myth without the slightest foundation in reality. They do not procreate through oral sex, and they do not give birth through the mouth. Nor do Hyenas change sex.

Leviticus 11:47

...between the unclean and the clean... From the beginning of Creation God's order has focused on creating divisions. He separated the light from the dark, the dry land from the seas, clean animals from unclean animals, and the woman from the man. He has commanded that his people should not marry unbelievers. Live in the world, change the world, but do not be of the world.

Tazria: Leviticus 12:1-13:59

Leviticus 12:2

...she shall be unclean for seven days... This is the same as the monthly seven day period of uncleanness and corresponds to the seven days of the Creation Week. A new life has gone out of her body, and this is a period of rest and restoration before she will begin a new cycle of creation. In actuality, it is often more than one week—sometimes several months—before a woman resumes her monthly cycles. In the case of childbirth, the normal seven days is extended to at least forty.

Remember that “unclean” does not mean “sinful.” The Hebrew word for unclean, *tame*, does not mean dirty or defiled. It means blocked or walled off. Something which is unclean is off limits. Defilement might cause something to become *tame*, but something *tame* is not necessarily defiled.

Leviticus 12:3

And in the eighth day... Eight signifies new beginnings. The Messiah rose from the grave on the eighth day of the week. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day to mark the beginning of his new life as a member of his tribe and nation.

Leviticus 12:4

...the blood of her purifying three and thirty days. Thirty days metaphorically marks the onset of a person’s ministry. Joseph, David, and Yeshua were all about thirty years old when they began their primary ministries. We all have multiple roles to fill in life, but every man has a peculiar mission by which he is to serve God. Three is the number of divinity. Three days memorializes man’s creation in the image of God. Man is the glory of God. The purification period after the birth of a boy totals forty days, which refers to the Messiah and the covering that he provides for his people. Every man is to be a covering for his house, protecting and leading them.

Leviticus 12:5

...she shall be unclean two weeks... Eve was a second act of creation, apart from the original Creation Week, and the first period of uncleanness after the birth of a girl is two weeks long. This might symbolize the re-creation or re-birth of a new convert to the religion of the true God. Since a girl is not circumcised when she joins her family’s tribe, she waits through a second week to serve that same purpose. The double-length of the mother’s period of “uncleanness” might also stem from the fact that not only has a new life left her body, but a new *source* of life has left her in the form of a newborn girl.

...the blood of her purifying threescore and six days... As with the first period, this second period is twice that required after the birth of a boy. The six days

memorializes woman's creation from the substance of man. Woman is the glory of man. I do not have a reasonable conjecture about the meaning of the sixty days.

Leviticus 12:6

...for a son, or for a daughter... Paul wrote that there is no male or female in Christ. Obviously, he did not mean his words to be taken in a mathematical sense. In another letter he wrote of the authority relationship between men and women, and in another he instructed wives to obey their husbands. His purpose was not to erase all distinctions between men and women, but to reassert what Moses recorded centuries before: the same lamb's blood covers the sins of both men and women.

Metzora: Leviticus 14:1-15:33

Acharei Mot: Leviticus 16:1-18:30

Leviticus 16:16

And he shall make an atonement for the holy place... There are several orders of priest: Melchizedek, Aaron, family, and believer. Each one is a scaled down version of the one before. The Ark with its covering—here called the mercy seat—is a model of priesthood, while the other articles of the tabernacle represent the people or spheres over which each priesthood presides. The priest made a covering (or atonement, Hebrew *kafar*) for the sanctuary because of the sins of the nation. So too can a father provide a degree of covering for the sins of his house. He cannot forgive their sins against God or remove them, but he has the authority to drive off unclean spirits, to invite godly and healing spirits, and to intervene with God on behalf of his wife and children.

Leviticus 16:17

And there shall be no man in the tabernacle... There can be only one high priest in each priestly order at one time. Yeshua said that no man can serve two masters. No house can have more than one high priest and father. No woman can have more than one husband. However, just as Yeshua's blood covers the sins of all peoples and the High Priest covers all twelve tribes of Israel, so too does this structure allow a man to cover more than one woman.

...an atonement for himself, his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. This illustrates three of the four priesthoods I mentioned above.

Leviticus 17:3-9

...that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices... God has created the universe and its inhabitants to work in certain ways. Gravity pulls us down toward the earth, and if we jump from a cliff, we fall to the ground. Relationships are also governed by a set of laws, however elusive and subtle their definition. God does not tolerate the worship of other gods. Any nation, any people may worship him, but it is the nature of legitimate authority that its subjects may not divide their loyalties. While it is possible for an authority to have a single subject—as with most marriages—all such relationships are one-to-many by nature. When Adam walked alone, God was potentially the God of the more than six billion people who live today. That fact had absolutely no effect on his ability to relate as God to Adam. He was neither more nor less God than if he had never created Eve and through her the rest of the human race. Likewise, a man who has one wife is potentially the husband of multiple wives. There is nothing inherent to the nature of marriage or his role as a husband which limits his ability to extend his authority over another woman. Of course, this is a theoretical capacity. No man compares to God, and the complexity of relationships which he is capable of managing is finite.

Leviticus 18:5-23

...he shall live in them. God did not give us rules for relationships—especially relationships between men and women—for his own health. Although obedience pleases him, he gave us rules for our own well-being. If we follow God’s blueprints for life, we will be happier than if we did not. It does not matter what our hearts (Need I quote Jeremiah again?) or celebrities or philosophers tell us is right or better. God’s words and God’s design matter. Many times while writing this book, I regretted having begun it. I do not like some of what I have found in God’s Law. If I were creating the rules, they would be much more egalitarian, easier for the woman who finds herself married to a man less capable than herself, and with less stress on a man’s authority over his house. Fortunately for everyone, I did not write the rules. I am only attempting to discuss them as truthfully as I am able, to convey what I believe God means for us to know and understand about him, ourselves, and our relationships. Only the Creator has the knowledge and the wisdom necessary to give us rules that will work for who we really are, and not who we wish we were. We can only apply those rules to our lives, and pray for the tiniest glimpse into his thoughts and the reasons why.

Marriage is assumed in every case presented in this passage. However, it should be noted that there is no word in the Tanakh which translates directly to marriage. In the table below, I show how the language of marriage in the Bible assumes the husband takes an active role in the acquisition of a wife, while the woman’s role is passive. This is an artifact of the authority structure within marriage. A woman cannot “take” a husband, but she can be taken. A man cannot be sold as a husband any more than an employer can be hired by a workman. All of these laws are directed at men, yet still address the relationships of women. For example, God does not forbid a sexual relationship with a woman’s brother, but with a man’s sister. He does not forbid sex with a woman’s uncle, but with a man’s niece. This is because sexual access is not for the woman to grant or deny within the bounds of marriage. The woman is the guardian of that access until she has a husband. The man is not only in a position of authority, but also of power. (The two necessarily go hand in hand. God does not assign a task without also giving the means to accomplish it.) In every case, the man is assumed to be guilty, while the woman is guilty only if complicit.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ In an interesting parallel with the betrothal of a woman to a man, a man’s consent might be required before he can be brought into relationship with God (Some might disagree.), but all the human consent in the universe would be insufficient without God’s election.

Table 6: Sampling of Hebrew words for marriage in the Tanakh¹¹⁹

Passage	Root	Hebrew	Literal
Genesis 19:14	Married	<i>Lakash</i>	Take
Genesis 38:8	Marry	<i>Yabam</i>	Perform
Exodus 21:3	Married	<i>Baal + ishshah</i>	Master a woman
Isaiah 54:1	Married wife	<i>Baal</i>	Mastered woman
Nehemiah 13:23	Married	<i>Yashab</i>	Settle
Psalms 78:63	Given to marriage	<i>Halal</i>	Celebrate

Note also that I treat the subject of incest with a degree of clinical detachment. We have a deep and natural abhorrence of incest, and rightly so. However, I do not believe it sufficient to simply call an act disgusting and move on. It seems necessary to me that a reason be given why it should be disgusting. Even so, my reasons might not be God's reasons. I merely offer one or two possibilities.

Leviticus 18:6

None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him... "Near of kin" can be concisely defined as being within three degrees of kinship, where each degree represents a link on a family tree. Relatives of the fourth degree who are not direct ancestors or descendants are permitted.

Table 7: Degrees of kinship

Degree	Definition	Examples
1 st	Direct blood relative with no intermediaries	Parent or child
2 nd	Close blood relative with a single intermediary	Sibling, grandparent, or grandchild
3 rd	Blood relative with two intermediaries	Niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, great grandparent, great grandchild
4 th	Blood relative with three intermediaries	First cousin, great niece, great nephew

¹¹⁹ As I have stated elsewhere, I am not a Hebrew scholar. I know a few words, and I can sound out the text in a poor fashion. For all Hebrew language references, I have relied on *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions* and *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*, both provided as a free plug-in to e-Sword Bible software. I realize that these are not the best reference works available; however, when used beside at least a dozen different translations of the Scriptures, I believe they have been completely adequate to my purposes. I have not endeavored to make a new translation, and no major point of theology in this work rests on an uncertain meaning of any isolated word.

I believe that some relationships are forbidden because they confuse lines of authority, others because they entail a higher risk of negative genetic feedback.¹²⁰ Researchers now tell us that choosing a mate too closely related will increase a woman's biological inclination toward infidelity.¹²¹ However, whether those arguments are right or wrong is irrelevant to whether or not these laws ought to be followed. God promised longer and more fruitful lives if we obey his commands, and he keeps his promises regardless of the degree or accuracy of our understanding.

Leviticus 18:7

The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother... Either case is a prohibition of sexual relations with one's own mother. It is adultery while your father lives and confuses lines of authority whether he lives or not. It also risks amplifying genetic defects inherited from your mother.

Leviticus 18:8

The nakedness of thy father's wife... As with your own mother, sexual relations with another wife of your father are adultery while he lives and confuses lines of authority otherwise. A sister-wife of your mother holds no direct authority over you except as an elder, but marrying her after his death is a claim to be his sole heir. In the absence of any other siblings, the prohibition still stands. It does not allow exceptions, and there might be other reasons that God prohibits such a relationship.¹²²

Leviticus 18:9

The nakedness of thy sister... A man is not to have sexual relations with his full or maternal half-sister. Although, at first reading this command seems to apply

¹²⁰ Although I have not seen the original research, I have read various news articles which cite studies showing that children born to first cousins do not have significantly higher risk of genetic defects—something along the lines of a 4-5% risk of congenital defect as opposed to 2-3% in the general population. The risk increases dramatically with 3rd, 2nd, and 1st degree relations. Cousins tend to have more children and fewer miscarriages than completely unrelated couples.

¹²¹ Elizabeth Svoboda, "Scents and Sensibility," *Psychology Today Magazine*. (Jan/Feb 2008, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20071228-000001.xml>. Accessed 12 February 2009.)

¹²² The Assyrians apparently had no such prohibition. According to *The Code of the Assura*, a man was free to marry a step-mother upon the death of his father. "If a woman whose husband is dead on the death of her husband do not go out from her house, if her husband did not leave her anything, she shall dwell in the house of one of her sons. The sons of her husband shall support her; her food and her drink, as for a fiancée whom they are courting, they shall agree to provide for her. If she be a second wife, and have no sons of her own, with one of her husband's sons she shall dwell and the group shall support her. If she have sons of her own, her own sons shall support her, and she shall do their work. But if there be one among the sons of her husband who marries her, the other sons need not support her." J. S. Arkenberg, "Ancient History Sourcebook: The Code of the Assura, c. 1075 BCE", (Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton, 1998, <http://www.fordham.edu/HALSALL/ancient/1075assyriancode.html>. Accessed March 31, 2008.)

to any half-sister, paternal half-sisters are addressed in verse eleven. The second half of this verse circumspectly highlights the possibility of a different father: “daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad.”

Leviticus 18:10

...thy son’s daughter or thy daughter’s daughter... A man is not to have sexual relations with his granddaughter because they are “his own nakedness.” Such relationships confuse lines of authority, elevating a daughter above her parent, and magnify genetic risks.

Leviticus 18:11

...thy father’s wife’s daughter... This is different than the command given in verse nine in that the prohibition here is against marriage to a paternal half-sister. Verse nine forbids a full sister or maternal half-sister. Since Abraham and Sarah violated this rule apparently with God’s blessing, and there is no prohibition against marrying a step-sister, I believe the only reason is to prevent the propagation of genetic error. As I am not God and he did not tell us his reasoning, this law must remain in effect even after we believe we have perfected the science of genetic engineering.

Leviticus 18:12-13

...thy father’s sister...thy mother’s sister... A man is not to marry his aunt, whether paternal or maternal.

Leviticus 18:14

...thy father’s brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife. The first part is not to be understood as condemning sodomy, which is sufficiently condemned elsewhere. Sexual access to a woman belongs to her husband, so that a violation of her is a violation of “the nakedness of thy father’s brother.”

Leviticus 18:15

...thy daughter in law... Adultery is a terrible crime on its own, but for it to be committed by a father against his own son is almost beyond comprehension.

I seems to me most unwise for a father-in-law to fulfill the levirate for his own son. Judah unwittingly did so with Tamara and called her more righteous than he because of it. However, he never had relations with her again he discovered it. I believe it should be done only as a very last resort. A third or fourth or even a fifth cousin of the deceased should be preferred over a father if such is available.

Leviticus 18:16

...thy brother's wife... Although polyandry is otherwise forbidden as adultery, the form practiced among some Himalayan peoples is twice forbidden. There, two brothers will share a wife between them. In the case of King Herod, John condemned his relationship with Herodias because she had been his brother Philip's wife while Philip still lived.

Leviticus 18:17

...a woman and her daughter... A man may not marry the daughter or any other descendant of his wife whether or not they are also his own descendants. Polygyny almost inevitably involves a certain degree of competition (as does having more than one child, employee, servant, etc.), which is not of itself a bad thing. Between a mother and daughter, however, competition is cruel and sometimes fatal.

Leviticus 18:18

...a wife to her sister, to vex her... Some say that this rule proscribes polygyny, but that can only be true if "sister" refers to any other woman. Sometimes the Hebrew word *akhot* is translated "another" or "other" in the context of a matched pair, such as one of a pair of shoes or wings.¹²³ It can also be used to describe a female "of intimate connection."¹²⁴ Solomon used it in that manner to refer to his lover in the Song of Songs. I could not find a single instance of it used to refer to any particular woman in relation to any other particular woman, but only when they are closely related by blood or behavior (such as cities sharing in idolatry and allegorically called sisters).

This rule does not even provide a strong basis on which to forbid sororal polygyny. The key phrase to understand why is "to vex her." God does not always explain the reasons for his laws, but prefers to illustrate them through history and allegory. In this case, he chose to make himself quite plain. There is nothing inherently wrong with marrying two sisters—God allegorically claimed to do just that in Ezekiel 23 and Jeremiah 3, and I do not believe that God would ever portray himself as sinful—but it can be a difficult situation to manage. Polygyny, on its own without this complication, exponentially increases the complexity of relationships within a family. Sororal polygyny, with its inherently higher risk of rivalry between wives, should be approached with extreme caution. It is flatly forbidden to a man who desires it with the intention of encouraging rivalry.

This might be a prohibition of sexual *ménage a trois* or lesbianism, but that also seems unlikely to me. The Hebrew word for "to vex," *tsarar*, implies enmity and not shame or embarrassment.

¹²³ See Exodus 26:3,5,17 or Ezekiel 1:9 and 3:13.

¹²⁴ *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definitions*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

Leviticus 18:19

...as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness. Menstruation is a time of infertility and even death. It is unclean because it is the body's rejection of an unproductive womb and ovum in preparation for a renewal. It is a loss of capacity for new life, while the sexual act is one of life and creation. Through procreation we emulate our Creator by bringing new life into the world. The confusing of death and creation through sexual relations during menstruation is disrespectful of God and contrary to his design.

Leviticus 18:20

...thy neighbor's wife. Note that this command is addressed to men. Do not lie with your neighbor's wife. It says nothing about lying with your neighbor's husband. This is due to the active role that men play in sexual relations as opposed to the woman's more passive role, as discussed above.

This verse also says that committing adultery makes one *tame*, but not "defiled" as the King James has it. Although adultery certainly defiles the adulterer, that is not the primary point here. The Hebrew word, *tame*, is usually translated as "unclean," but that is misleading. "Set apart," "blocked off," or even "taboo" would be a better translation. Something that has become *tame* has become barricaded, as a gate closing against an invader. An adulterer is to be barricaded away from his people, no longer fit to be a husband to his wife or a father to his children.

Leviticus 18:21

...pass through the fire to Molech. On the surface, it might seem odd to our modern sensibilities that child sacrifice should be included in a list of forbidden sexual practices. In fact, procreation is the focus of this entire passage. Sexual intercourse during menstruation is forbidden because it is an insult to the image of the Creator God in us. Dedicating a child to a false god, whether merely by the symbol of a fire baptism or by actual burnt offering, is much worse.¹²⁵ Scripture consistently describes children as a blessing given directly by God. Taking a new life, innocent and created in God's image, and then deliberately destroying it in the name of a demon or giving it to that demon is perhaps the worst insult a person could offer God.

Furthermore, historians tell us that the religions of Yahweh and of the baals were confused by such practices. The ancient Israelites and others who lived in the region called their false gods by the name of the true God, even practicing their false religions in his temple. Because of that confusion, many historians believe that Baal and Yahweh are two terms for the same deity. God almost certainly had this in mind when he commanded Israel not to profane his name.

¹²⁵ Abortion is another form of child sacrifice performed in the name of self. It destroys God's image and blessing for the sake of convenience, comfort, or wealth.

Leviticus 18:22

Thou shalt not lie with mankind... A common manner in which an invading army might desecrate and insult the holy places and deity of the vanquished is by defecate in the temples and on the altars. Yet, this is what some people call love. Sodomy is an unequivocal insult to God. It is a desecration of the procreative power he has delegated to us. This is why Yeshua said in Revelation that people who practice such things are barred from His kingdom. If you gave someone a priceless and beautiful vase, and they used it as a toilet, no matter how nice a person they might be otherwise, would you still call them your friend and faithful servant? Use of a condom cannot make it less disgusting to God. Would you congratulate your friend if he lined your vase with a plastic bag before he squatted over it?

Leviticus 18:23

Neither shalt thou lie with any beast... Bestiality involves a mixing of things which God designed to be separate. The very first task which God assigned to humanity involved determining that no animal could ever be a true compliment to a man. Woman was designed for that purpose. For either man or woman to lie with an animal is an insult to God, man, and woman. Anyone who does so is to be executed along with the animal.

Leviticus 18:24-30

That the land spue not you out also... God's rules of sexual conduct are more than behavioral guidelines. They are natural laws. If a people continually violate them, they will be removed, whether by war as the Canaanites, by supernatural intervention as the Sodomites, or by natural disaster. The seriousness with which God views sexual purity is evident by his prescribed punishment, death. Not only are we not to commit them ourselves, but we are not to tolerate them within our borders. That is not to say we should hunt out sexual perverts or invade anyone's privacy. When those things are made public, however, especially when they are flaunted, they should be excised from society. The alternative is eventually to suffer the same fate as the Canaanites. In many cases, even their animals were not spared.

Kedoshim: Leviticus 19:1-20:27

Leviticus 19:3

Ye shall fear every man... The command to honor our parents is the only one of the Ten Commandments to be accompanied by a specific promise. God gains nothing tangible by the honor and fear we give our parents, while we gain longer and happier life through obedience and learned wisdom. Mothers are given precedence because we do not naturally fear them. It is easy for a child to fear his father. He is threatening and powerful, while mothers are kind and comforting. Yet God says that we are to treat them with fear for our own profit in spite of our natural inclination.

Leviticus 19:19

Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind. On the surface or *p'shat* level these three rules mean exactly what they say: Do not attempt to cross-breed different kinds of animals, such as sheep with cattle or horses. Do not broadcast different kinds of seeds together, such as wheat with barley. Finally, do not weave clothes of wool and linen fibers together, perhaps forbidding all mixture of plant and animal fibers. At a deeper level, these rules encompass the mixing of believers with unbelievers. Do not allow your sons or daughters to marry the children of unbelievers.

Leviticus 19:20-22

My interpretation of this law differs significantly from that of many other commentators. As this is one of those places at which God's law—or rather the King James translation of it—does not sit well with me, there is a significant possibility that I have interpreted it according to my own preferences and not according to the Spirit's leading.

...a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed... There are three persons involved:

1. A master. He is the primary actor and the one who has promised the bondmaid to another man.
2. A female slave. She was probably born into her master's house or else was purchased specifically to be the wife of another slave. If she had been acquired to be a slave for the master, then this law would not apply.
3. The husband. He is a free man who has contracted for the woman, but has not yet paid her ransom.

If the master violates the slave woman, having already promised her to another man, he has not committed adultery with her because the betrothal has not been confirmed by the payment of her ransom.

She shall be scourged. John Wesley wrote that the Hebrew does not specify “she.”¹²⁶ Instead, he believed the text should read, “They shall be scourged.” I disagree with both of those translations. *Young’s Literal Translation* reads, “An investigation there is.” Most of the previous laws involve the unfair treatment of one person by another, and I believe that to be the case here as well. The woman has done nothing wrong in submitting to the man who has present authority over her, but she and her betrothed were both cheated by the master. I do not believe that God intends us to punish a woman for being misused by her master, so I must conclude that Young’s translation is more accurate, that there is to be an investigation or examination, but no punishment.

...the sin which he hath done... The master has sinned in abusing his authority and must bring a trespass offering for an atonement. It is restorative and not punitive.

Leviticus 19:27

...mar the corners of thy beard. Verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight are a single law. Cutting off hair and cutting in the skin were both mourning practices of the pagan nations around Israel. The hair around a man’s face is like a mane. It marks him as a man and the glory of God, just as a woman’s long and beautiful hair marks her as the glory of man. Rejecting the form in which we were created seems to me like a rejection of God’s plan and authority in our lives. To do so in mourning is understandable, but this law reminds us that all things are under God’s control. For those who trust in him—even in loss—all things work for good.

Leviticus 19:29

Do not prostitute thy daughter... Some peoples included prostitution in the worship of their gods. Others sold their daughters into prostitution to raise a dowry.¹²⁷ Other people in all times and cultures have treated their daughters in such a way that they lose all sense of propriety and moral stricture. We must be very careful in the way we bring up our daughters. They must be treated with respect so that they do not lose respect for men. They must be taught decorum so that they will abhor immodesty and crude behavior. They must be taught obedience and submission so that they will live godly and happy lives after they become wives and mothers.

Leviticus 19:32

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head... God designed hair in part to advertise status. Gray hair is a sign of someone who deserves respect. Hair on the chin is a sign of strength. Long hair is a sign of submission.

¹²⁶ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

¹²⁷ One element of the legend of Nicholas of Myra, who is one source of the myths of Santa Claus, is that he rescued several poor girls from just such an arrangement.

Leviticus 19:34

...as one born among you... God's restriction against marrying foreigners is not of racial prejudice, but religious. God's law applies equally to the native born Israelite and to the foreigner who chooses to live among them. Therefore, the immigrant must abandon all idolatry and adopt the religion of Yahweh. The mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with Israel was counted by God as one and the same with Israel. The wilderness camp was not organized according to twelve tribes and another camp of gentiles, but only according to the twelve tribes. Those people were grafted in and settled with their adoptive tribes in the Promised Land as if they were genetically identical. A believing Englishman is free to marry a woman from China, Ghana, or Bolivia and vice versa. He would be wise to consider the possible barriers presented by cultural differences to future peace and happiness, but there is no moral reason he should marry only an English woman.¹²⁸

Leviticus 20:1-23

In this section God repeats many of the commands he gave in chapter 18 and will give some yet again in Deuteronomy 22. Each iteration is made with a different emphasis.

Leviticus 20:2-5

Whosoever...giveth any of his seed unto Molech... It seems difficult to imagine making a sacrificial offering of any person, let alone one's own child. But is it really that great a leap from killing a child for the favor of some false God to killing a child because it is unwanted or because it was conceived at an inconvenient time? It is easier to rationalize the killing of an unborn child who cannot be seen or heard, but is it less evil?

The man who sacrifices his child to Molech is to be stoned by the whole congregation so that everyone will see just how seriously God views such behavior. If the people refuse to act against that man, then God will act against him and his whole family. Like the land that is poisoned by sexual misconduct, so an entire family suffers and is infected by the idolatry of its head.

Most of God's law is presented as voluntary (though certainly not optional), leaving to us the decision to obey. We are commanded to tie *tzitziyot* on our clothes and to tithe, but no punishments are prescribed if we do not. Most punishments which are commanded are left to the people to carry out. Idolatry and sexual perversion, however, are set apart as especially abhorrent to God. He tells us that he or the land itself will intervene if we do not. There is a parallel in the relationship between husband and wife. A wise husband might make his wishes known, but he will not force his wife to wear his preferred colors or to fold his clothes this way or

¹²⁸ Or white or black or Catholic or Protestant.

that. On the other hand, no man should be faulted for not tolerating some other behaviors, such as adultery or public indecency.

Leviticus 20:10

...adultery with another man's wife... This iteration of the law against adultery emphasizes that it applies only to a relationship between a married woman and a man who is not her husband. A man cannot commit adultery with an unmarried, unbetrothed woman. A sexual relationship between them might be sinful, but it is not adultery because her reproductive capacity does not yet belong to another man.

Both adulterous participants are to be executed, which presupposes that the woman is complicit. In the case of rape, the woman has done nothing wrong if she made a serious attempt to resist. This also means that the woman should never be executed alone. It is not possible to catch a lone individual in the act of committing adultery.

Leviticus 20:11

And the man that lieth with his father's wife... The law does not say, "The man that lieth with his mother..." The actual wording includes the man's mother as well as any other wives of his father. A relationship with the one would be incestuous, while both would confuse lines of authority.

Leviticus 20:12

And if a man lie with his daughter in law... Such would confuse lines of authority in addition to being adultery.

(See also Leviticus 18:15.)

Leviticus 20:13

If a man also lieth with mankind... Homosexuality is disgusting to God and cannot be tolerated among a people which desires to live in God's grace. As with the surrounding laws concerning sexual relationships between men and women, this law presumes both men are complicit. Although consensual relationships would seem to be outside the purview of public law, some forms of immorality poison the very land, eventually resulting in the suffering of all. Witness the destruction visited on Sodom, Egypt, and Gibeah. We do not allow one man to dump large amounts of harmful chemicals in his back yard because they would spoil the soil and water of those around him. Nor should we allow the open practice of sexual perversion because that also spoils the land.

Leviticus 20:14

And if a man take a wife and her mother... To marry both a mother and daughter confuses the natural lines of authority between them, potentially making

them rivals. Incest between father and daughter is implicitly included within this law, and the Babylonian Talmud extends it—correctly, I believe—to all female ancestors and descendants.¹²⁹ Only the complicit parties would be punished. If the first wife did not consent to the second marriage, then she would be innocent. I do not know why the punishment is so severe.

Leviticus 20:15-16

And if a man lie with a beast... To elevate an animal to the place of a woman or for a woman to degrade herself to its level shows a horrible disrespect for women, for man from whom woman was created, and for God and his design. There is no place for animals in the relationship between husband and wife. Although the animal can never properly give its consent, it is also to be destroyed. It has been contaminated and cannot be used for any other purpose nor be allowed to repeat a learned behavior.

Leviticus 20:17

And if a man take his sister... Whether full sister or half, she is forbidden.

...and she see his nakedness... This additional phrase indicates that a woman who is complicit in sin must face the consequences alongside the man.

He shall bear his iniquity. Although the woman is also guilty, the man is the primary sexual actor. It is extraordinarily difficult for a woman to force a man into sexual relations.¹³⁰ It appears that God applies a standard similar to what is frequently used in traffic accidents: the last driver who failed to prevent the incident is considered to be at fault. Other drivers might be cited for traffic violations, but only one name will go on that line in the accident report. In this law, both participants are to be punished, but God said that the man is the greater sinner.

Leviticus 20:18

He hath discovered her fountain... This does not appear to refer to finding the fountain itself, but to emptying it out. According to *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions*, the Hebrew word here translated as “discovered” (*'arah*) also means “to be bare, be nude...leave destitute...empty, raze, pour out.” The sense seems to be that he has deliberately planted a seed in infertile soil, but there is more behind this prohibition than I am able to discern. There is no law against sexual intercourse with an infertile woman or with a woman beyond child-bearing age, and Leviticus 20:18 is explicitly limited in application to intercourse during menstruation or some other condition such as that of the woman in Mark 5:25.

¹²⁹ *Babylonian Talmud, Book 2*. Trans. Michael L. Rodkinson. (Internet Sacred Text Archive, 1918, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>. Accessed 05 February 2009.) 222

¹³⁰ Manipulation and fraud, although they are certainly immoral, are not the same as force.

Leviticus 20:19

...thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister... This is a repeat of Leviticus 18:12-13, however the order of relation and the justification are different. In chapter eighteen, God listed a father's sister then a mother's sister. Here, the mother's sister is given first. Previously, God said that a blood aunt is forbidden because she is the near relative of one's father or mother. In this instance, God said that she is one's own near relative.

Leviticus 20:20

And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife... This law applies while the uncle still lives. Since marriage ends at the death of one of the parties, it would no longer be "his uncle's nakedness."

They shall die childless. If there was a delay in judgment for some reason, and a child (or children) has been born from their sin, then the child would be a bastard with no inheritance rights.

Leviticus 20:21

And if a man shall take his brother's wife... While his brother still lives. As in the case of an uncle's wife, any children would be ineligible to inherit.

Leviticus 20:23

...therefore I abhorred them. God judged the Canaanite nations before he ever gave the Torah to Israel at Sinai and despite their lack of descent from Abraham because they failed to live up to God's standards. How much more should he judge us who have his Torah, his prophets, his Messiah, and adoption as children of Abraham?

Emor: Leviticus 21-24

Leviticus 21:2

But for his kin, that is near unto him... Although only blood relatives are listed explicitly, the one-flesh principle of husband and wife strongly suggests that a priest's wife is included within the set of kin "near unto him."

Leviticus 21:3

And for his sister a virgin... When a woman marries, she ceases to be a part of her father's house and joins her husband's. See Leviticus 22:13 for exceptions. Her new husband must take on any responsibilities related to her death. Her brother is no longer her close relative.

Leviticus 21:5

...the corner of their beard... Although I believe that a man ought to maintain facial hair out of respect for his Creator, this law was given in the context of caring for the dead. As can be seen from numerous other passages in Scripture, removing one's hair, cutting one's skin, and tearing one's clothing were common expressions of mourning. A man's beard, like a lion's mane, is a symbol of his place in God's ordained hierarchy. Removing it removes one of the most obviously distinguishing sexual characteristics. I believe that a man, and especially a priest who is even more holy to God than other men, should not shun that distinction even in mourning.

Leviticus 21:7-8

...for he is holy unto his God. In the previous verses God forbade a priest to have contact with death because there must be some distance between those things and the holy things of God. In verse 8, God said that the prohibition against a priest marrying a defiled woman is for the same purpose. It is not a sin to marry a loose woman or else God commanded Hosea to sin. Neither is it a sin to marry a divorced woman, provided she is actually divorced and has a *ghet* (certificate of divorce) to prove it. However, a priest is allowed to marry neither. Marriage with such a woman might cause damage in at least two ways: First, she carries with her something of the other men with whom she has already been one flesh. Whoever marries her becomes one with her and all that she has been. Second, his sons would also be priests, yet with a wife who is not a virgin—and especially with a wife who tends to stray—he would never be certain that her children are actually sons of Aaron. If he were to serve his time in the Temple and go defiled before God, his life would be in jeopardy. If his illegitimate son, perhaps even believing himself to be a legitimate son of Aaron, were to do the same, his life would also be at risk.

God makes his reasoning plain in this case: it is not inherently immoral to marry a loose woman or a divorced woman. It is not a higher moral standard, just a

practical one. Champion athletes should not eat doughnuts, and priests should not marry defiled women.

Leviticus 21:9

And the daughter of any priest... Jewish tradition says that this was a married daughter so that she was already condemned to die by stoning. Her body would be burned after her execution. This is not at all clear from the text. That she is called the daughter of a priest leads me to believe that she could not be married. If she were, then she would no longer be a member of her father's household.

It is doubly important that a priest—as well as other leaders—keep his house in order. Centuries later Paul included having children “in subjection with all gravity” among the important qualities of a spiritual leader. As a Torah scholar, there is little doubt his advice was founded in part on this law regarding a priest's daughter.

Leviticus 21:13-14

And he shall take a wife in her virginity. The higher one's authority, the higher must be one's standards. It is not a sin for an ordinary man to marry a loose woman, and it is entirely appropriate for him to marry a widow. A high priest, on the other hand, can marry neither. He may only take a wife from among those daughters of Israel who have never been with a man. It is important that every man among God's people bring up his daughters so that they will be eligible to marry a high priest. And not his daughters only. His sons must be taught to respect boundaries and propriety, to behave as men of God, and to marry wisely. The office of High Priest normally passed from father to firstborn son unless the son had disqualified himself by some serious character flaw or by marriage to a non-virgin. If it is important for any Cohen to ensure his children are legitimate, it is doubly important for the *Cohen Hagodal*.

In ancient Jewish thought, especially as expressed in the *Babylonian Talmud*,¹³¹ a virgin can either be a woman who has never had sexual intercourse or a woman who has never been married. In this case, the stricter definition almost certainly applies.

Leviticus 21:15

Neither shall he profane his seed among his people. Although I have said that *one* reason a high priest must marry a virgin is to protect potentially illegitimate children, God said the primary reason is to protect his own legitimate offspring. Marriage to a virgin protects inheritance of the priesthood, and her high moral standard helps instill those same standards in her children.

¹³¹ Consider this odd phrase found on page 194 of Rodkinson's *Talmud, Tract Sanhedron*, “If ten men knew her while she was still a virgin...”

Leviticus 21:17

Whosoever...that hath any blemish... It is not a sin to be imperfect, nor are imperfections necessarily the result of one's own or one's parents' sins. This law is not a punishment. It is a precaution to protect the priest from the mortal danger of approaching too closely to the perfection of the Almighty.

Impotence and sterility are not specifically addressed in this passage because they are not conditions which easily lend themselves to physical examination; however they are just as much a blemish. Therefore, before taking office a priest must marry and sire children. As with other priestly requirements, this is reflected in Paul's instructions to Titus and Timothy regarding church leaders.

Leviticus 22:12

If the priest's daughter also be married unto a stranger... A woman leaves her father's house to join her husband's. If a priest's daughter marries a man who is not a priest, then she is no longer eligible to eat the offerings from the Tabernacle or Temple. On the other hand, a woman who marries a priest, whether she is the daughter of another priest or not, may eat of her husband's share of the offerings.

Leviticus 22:13

But if the priest's daughter...is returned unto her father's house... A woman who is widowed or divorced without children may return to her father's house as if she never left. If she is a widow, then she must be presumed to be waiting for a relative of her late husband to fulfill the levirate. If she is divorced then she left her children behind or else she bore none. If she is divorced and has the care of her children, then she cannot become part of her father's house again, because her children remain under her husband's authority and within his house for inheritance purposes. Although divorced from her husband, she remains a part of his tribe for the sake of her children. This implies that if the same woman remarries, then her children from her previous marriage must remain with her previous husband to prevent confusing lines of inheritance.

Leviticus 22:28

...ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day. The commentators appear nearly unanimous in stating the purpose of this law is to teach mercy. Though this explanation *feels* right, I confess I do not know how it is merciful not to kill both mother and young on the same day.

Leviticus 24:1-23

Although this chapter appears to deal with several completely different issues, they are in fact all linked by fatherhood. The Menorah is Israel's daughters, the bread is Israel's sons, and the capital offenses listed could be avoided by proper teaching and discipline.

Leviticus 24:2

...pure oil olive beaten for the light... This is the second iteration of the command to provide olive oil for the Menorah. Since the Menorah is emblematic of femininity, this command is an allusion to the responsibility of fathers to bring up their daughters to be wise, Spirit-filled mothers and wives.

Leviticus 24:3-4

...shall Aaron order it... The priest of every spiritual jurisdiction is responsible for regulating his tabernacle. In the family, the father holds that authority. Since this command is explicitly speaking of ordering the use of the oil and the Menorah, the implication is that fathers have specific authority to order the activities of their wives.

It shall be a statute for ever in your generations. This principle can never expire or be overridden so long as the human race continues to procreate.

Leviticus 24:5

Two tenth deals shall be in one cake. Using the Tabernacle as an image of the family, the oil and the Menorah represent Israel's daughters and wives. The bread and the Table represent Israel's sons. The twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes and their patriarchal structure. Families are built and organized around sons. The two omers of grain in each loaf represent the balance of grace and law by which sons are turned into men. (In Leviticus 23, God commands us to count fifty days from the waving of the omer on Firstfruits until *Shavuot*¹³², which memorializes the days on which God gave both the Torah and the Holy Spirit.)

Leviticus 24:7

...put pure frankincense upon each row... Frankincense is a main ingredient in incense, which represents prayer. Our prayers are an indispensable element in raising up sons into Godly men.

Leviticus 24:8

Every Sabbath he shall set it in order... Over and above the daily transmission of Torah from father to son, the Sabbath is a time for reordering, restoring, and resting from the world.

¹³² *Shavuot* is also known as *Pentecost*. The original *Shavuot* celebrates the giving of the Torah at Sinai, while the later *Pentecost* celebrates the giving of the Holy Spirit on *Shavuot* in Jerusalem. Both events occurred on the same day of the Hebrew calendar.

Leviticus 24:10-23

...whose father was an Egyptian... According to Torah, almost anyone can become one of God's people. There were undoubtedly Egyptians in the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with Israel; however, those who adopted God's law were no longer counted as Egyptians. This man's father had either not left Egypt at all or else had tagged along but not taken the name of Israel. God's response to the blasphemy makes it clear that race was not an issue—the punishment for blasphemy is the same regardless of its source—but would there have been any blasphemy to punish if the Israelites had not born the child of an unbeliever?

This story along with God's apparent approval of Moses' marriage to two foreign women, a Midianite and a Cushite, shows that the rules against marrying "strangers" is about marrying those of a foreign religion, not birth. It also illustrates the importance of a Godly father in the upbringing of children. God did not limit his instructions to the specific case at hand, but gave a list of violent crimes that are likely to result from a believing woman being unequally yoked with an unbelieving man (or no man at all). Criminologists and psychologists today confirm that violent crime and atheism are both associated with absent or abusive fathers.¹³³:

Divorce, poverty, and antisocial behavior among teens are inextricably linked. Seventy-five percent of female-headed, single-family homes live below the poverty level, and eighty-five percent of children with behavioral disorders¹³⁴ and ninety percent of all homeless and runaway children¹³⁵ also come from fatherless homes. Similar statistics can be found to correlate almost every social problem imaginable with the absence of fathers. Even those researchers and pundits who do not believe that absent fathers are a significant risk to teenagers admit that fathers are necessary for proper socialization and discipline of children.¹³⁶

In "The Psychology of Atheism," Paul Vitz called the link between poor fathers and atheism the "defective father hypothesis."¹³⁷

[Freud] makes the simple easily understandable claim that once a child or youth is disappointed in and loses his or her respect for

¹³³ Jay H. Carper, "What Puts Teens at Risk? And What Can Be Done About It?" (Jay's Thoughts on Stuff, <http://www.historycarper.com/wordpress/?p=9>. Accessed 04 April 2006.)

¹³⁴ Gene Stephens, "A Variety of Factors Put Teens at Risk," *Teens at Risk: Opposing Viewpoints*, Laura K. Egenorf, Editor. (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc. 1999) 20

¹³⁵ U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census. (As reported by *Getting Men Involved: The Newsletter of the Bay Area Male Involvement Network*, Spring 1997, and *fathermag.com*, <http://www.fathermag.com/news/2778-stats.shtml>. Accessed 28 March 2006.)

¹³⁶ Stephanie Coontz, "The Absence of Fathers Does Not Put Teens at Significant Risk," *Teens at Risk: Opposing Viewpoints*, Laura K. Egenorf, Editor. (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc. 1999.) 42

¹³⁷ Paul C. Vitz, "The Psychology of Atheism," (Paper presented at Leadership University, copyright 2002, reproduced at Origins, http://www.origins.org/articles/vitz_psychologyofatheism.html. Accessed May 13, 2008.)

their earthly father, then belief in their heavenly Father becomes impossible. There are, of course, many ways that a father can lose his authority and seriously disappoint a child. Some of these ways- for which clinical evidence is given below-are:

1. He can be present but obviously weak, cowardly, and unworthy of respect- even if otherwise pleasant or “nice.”
2. He can be present but physically, sexually, or psychologically abusive.
3. He can be absent through death or by abandoning or leaving the family.

Vitz continued by describing the unfortunate relationships between several well known atheists and their fathers: Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Feuerbach, Madalyn Murray O’Hair, and Baron d’Holbach. The same principle has held true in my own experience with atheists. They almost universally had very bad relationships with their fathers.

Behar: Leviticus 25:1-26:2

Leviticus 25:23

...for the land is mine. God’s plan is that the land should be inextricably tied to a family. A tribe was allotted a particular region. Within that region each family was allotted a particular piece of land. If a man died childless, there were provisions to ensure that his inheritance stayed within the family as much as possible. Within a few limits, what a man did with his land was completely up to him. Yet this passage makes it clear that no one but God really owns the land. In fact, no one really owns anything at all. Everything belongs to God and all authority, even over our own bodies, is only delegated from him to mankind. He blesses whom he will bless, and he curses whom he will curse. If you abuse the authority which God has given you, you should not be surprised when he takes it away. We speak in terms of “my” this and “your” that for the sake of simplicity, but in reality nothing is mine and nothing is yours. We are only strangers and pilgrims in the land. We are God’s servants and must do as he commands with his possessions.

Leviticus 25:41

...he and his children with him... This command assumes that these children were born of a wife that the slave brought with him. If the master had given him a wife, she and any children she bore would remain with the master after the male servant was released.

Leviticus 25:43

Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour... Treat those under your authority with the respect due to God’s servants. Assuming they are believers, your employees, your wife, and your children all serve God through serving you.

Leviticus 25:44-46

Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids... On the surface, this chapter’s rules concerning the treatment of foreign and Israelite slaves appear to allow for the release of female Israelite slaves in the seventh year. However, Exodus 21:7 says that a female Israelite sold by her father cannot be released as would be a male Israelite. The key is to understand that the Exodus law is addressing concubinage. When a father sells his daughter, it must be presumed that his intent is to give her to a husband. If an Israelite woman is purchased simply as domestic help, then she must be set free in the sixth year. A foreign woman may be acquired permanently. Since God also commanded Israel not to take foreign wives—unbelievers—then such women would be purchased as domestic workers or handmaids for a daughter.

...of the heathen that are round about you. Israelites are not allowed to make permanent slaves of fellow Israelites without their consent, and they are never

allowed to treat them “with rigour.” Foreigners, on the other hand, may be owned as chattel, to be bought, sold, and inherited like livestock. Although I do not know precisely why God would allow such a relationship, it provides a useful metaphor of salvation. One interesting potential result is evangelism. A God-fearing man should be teaching his entire household in God’s ways. His slaves should be keeping Sabbath and God’s feasts (in part, at least) along with his family, and should therefore also regularly hear about God’s laws and plan of salvation. The end result would be that many foreign-born slaves would in time cease to be foreigners and would become Israelites. A promise of future release could be a powerful incentive to pay attention at synagogue.

Bechukotai: Leviticus 26:3-27:34

Leviticus 26:9

For I will...make you fruitful, and multiply you...God explicitly ties fertility to obedience. There are certainly other factors involved—for example, Sarah was not barren for ninety years because of her disobedience—but for most people in most times, keeping Torah will result in more and healthier children.

Leviticus 26:22

I will send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children... Disobedience could cause the death of children already born. The “wild beasts” might be of either variety: two-legged or four-legged. Tragedy happens to both the innocent and the guilty; however the guilty will have more of it. To take one obvious example that still seems to have eluded the grasp of the vast majority of parents, if you allow your daughters to dress as prostitutes, expect them to be treated as prostitutes or worse. God’s laws teach us how to live at peace and in kindness with one another. Obey him in all things, and life will simply go better for you.

Leviticus 27:2-7

...the persons...by thy estimation... God does not accept imperfect sacrifices, and all humans are imperfect. If one person should promise to give to God another person who is under his authority, God has provided a method by which the object of the vow can be redeemed in silver, which symbolizes blood.

Table 8: Valuation of persons vowed

Age	Sex	Valuation
1 mo – 5 years	Female	3
	Male	5
5 – 20 years	Female	10
	Male	20
20 – 60 years	Female	30
	Male	50
60+ years	Female	10
	Male	15

This valuation obviously does not encompass all possible variables. It appears to be based only on the value of the person’s labor. Elsewhere God commands respect

for the elderly and fear for mothers, so this has no bearing on whether or not a person is loved, respected, or otherwise valued for non-economic factors.

NUMBERS – *Bamidbar*

Bamidbar: Numbers 1:1-4:20

Numbers 1:2

...the children of Israel... According to the context, this should have been translated “the sons of Israel.”

...by the house of their fathers... God’s people are organized by families headed by patriarchs, and when left to their own devices, families in agrarian societies will almost always organize themselves accordingly. The modern secular state is incompatible with God’s intended form of civil government. Lawrence Stone wrote,

The modern state is a natural enemy to the values of kinship, especially among the upper classes, for kinship is a direct threat to the state’s own claim to prior loyalty. Kinship leads to aristocratic faction and rebellion, such as the War of the Roses or the Fronde, to the independence of entrenched local potentates using kin loyalties to create powerful local connections, and to making the working of the jury system of justice impossible by the subordination of objective judgment to ties of blood. In the sixteenth century, the State in England increasingly assumed monopoly powers of justice and punishment, military protection, welfare, and the regulation of property. This takeover was accompanied by a massive propaganda campaign for loyalty, inculcating the view that the first duty of every citizen is obedience to the sovereign, that man’s highest obligation is to his country, involving the subordination of all other considerations and loyalties, even life itself.¹³⁸

Although Stone is demonstrably incorrect concerning the jury system, his observations on the tendency of the state to subvert kinship ties is not. The Assyrians regularly deported entire nations in order to uproot them from their ancestral homes and break the alliances of blood. The same phenomenon was observed in the relocation programs of the Soviets in the twentieth century and of the Americans in the nineteenth. Tying such things as military commands to patriarchal clans tends to discourage the grand military adventurism of conquest and world policing and the centralization of power into the hands of a small political elite.

Numbers 1:3

...all that are able to go forth to war in Israel. By God’s decree, only able-bodied men were counted as able to fight. Although women might have fought in

¹³⁸ Lawrence Stone, “The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England: The Patriarchal Stage,” *The Family in History*, Ed. Charles E. Rosenberg. (Philadelphia: 1975.) 24

desperate circumstances against invaders, they were neither recruited nor accepted into the army. The fact of men's superior physical strength and military mind has been universally recognized throughout history. Although the misguided egalitarian politics of today often put women into combat roles, all but the most delusional feminists know it to be foolish.

Numbers 1:4

...head of the house of his fathers. Although women may occupy positions of power or authority in exceptional circumstances, by God's design in Genesis and by his decree here in Numbers, the major heads of families, clans, armies, and nations will normally be men. The inherent qualities of men tend to suit them better than women to such roles. Patriarchy was not only the rule in ancient Israel but in nearly all cultures in nearly all eras. In the prologue to *Marriage, East and West*, David and Vera Mace wrote:

From the Fertile Crescent...to the rocky eastern shores of Nippon...the patriarchal family reigns supreme. For full four thousand years of recorded history it has held undisputed sway. The odd and fascinating family patterns of some island peoples and hill tribes—polyandry, matrilineal descent, matrilocal marriage, and the like—have captivated the anthropologists. But these are, by comparison with the patriarchal family system, of little account in the great stream of human culture...The hereditary pattern that has dominated the human family, that has been passed down through countless generations, in East and West alike, is solidly, unvaryingly patriarchal.¹³⁹

Their conclusion was most soundly reinforced by Stephen Goldberg throughout *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*. He went a step further than the Maces, however, by asserting that those few exceptions are either too unstable to last more than a few generations or else they are illusions, actual patriarchies behind a few token elements of matriarchy.¹⁴⁰

Numbers 1:18

...all the congregation...by the house of their fathers... Although only the men were counted in this census, the entire nation gathered under the banners of their patriarchs to witness the count. It was not only the army, but the entire nation that was patriarchally organized at God's instruction.

¹³⁹ David and Vera Mace, *Marriage, East and West*. (Garden City, NY: Dolphin Books, 1960.) 29

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*. (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1974.)

Numbers 1:52

...and every man by his own standard... The tribes of Israel were arranged about the Tabernacle with four tribes on each side. The Talmud indicates that “his own camp” and “his own standard” refer to these multi-tribal groupings and their associated banners.¹⁴¹ That is certainly a possible interpretation, but it might also be that “his own standard” means his own *personal* standard. I suspect that the garment from which the modern *tallit* evolved was once used as an inherited badge of office, such as Elijah’s mantle. In turn, the ancient mantle might have evolved from standards such as those spoken of in this verse.

Numbers 1:53

...that there be no wrath upon the congregation... The Levites were a covering—a layer of protection—for the nation of Israel. Essentially, shelter is the function of all coverings, whether they are of wood and stone, fabric, blood, or authority. The Messiah covers all of his people, a father covers his family, and a mother covers her children. Each covering provides another layer of protection from spiritual hazards. God did not place the Levites between himself and the people because of any animosity he felt toward Israel, but because his presence, like fire or radiation, is dangerous. The greater purity of heart of the Levites as demonstrated in the incident of the golden calf made them less likely to be burned by that power and so they were able to act as something of a firebreak for the rest of the nation.

Numbers 2:2

...with the ensign of his father’s house... If my suspicions regarding these “standards” are correct—and I admit that this is a tenuous conjecture; see Numbers 1:52—then each head of a household or family encampment had his own standard, probably incorporating the symbol of the greater tribe. For example, every standard within Judah would have depicted a lion plus something that identified the specific clan and family within the tribe.

Numbers 3:6-10

...that they may minister unto him. The Levites’ righteousness at Mt. Sinai allowed them to come closer to God, and they were given a position of honor among the Israelites, including the honor of serving the Cohanim and the Tabernacle. They were commanded by God to fulfill a particular role. There is no dishonor in serving another human being, whether as a Levite, an employee, a wife, or a minister.

And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons. God is the absolute owner of all things and all persons. They are his to dispose of as he wills. If he chooses to delegate some of that authority to one or another of his creations, on what grounds may we object? We are fond of asserting that no man can own

¹⁴¹ *The Talmud*. Trans. Joseph Barclay. (1878. Internet Sacred Text Archive, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>. Accessed 5 February 2009.) 335

another, but I have yet to hear a reason why that should be so. Truly, no mortal can have unqualified ownership over anything at all, not even a single speck of dust. However, God grants property interest in this or that person or piece of land because it suits his purposes to do so. A “property interest” is nothing more than an authority relationship. There is nothing degrading about submitting to divinely ordained authority.

...they shall wait on their priest’s office... Every person is under authority to someone else. A son is under his parents’ authority, a wife is under her husband’s, a Levite under the priests’, and the High Priest under the Messiah’s.

...the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. This illustrates the seriousness in which God holds his created order. If an unqualified person stood in the place of the High Priest, his offerings and ceremonies would be useless. For the well-being of the entire nation, that role must be protected against interlopers. Similarly, for the well-being of the nation and especially of individual families, the different roles of husband and wife must be protected. I am not suggesting that we should kill a woman who gets out of line—the stakes of an individually mismanaged family do not approach those of a mismanaged nation—but that we should encourage men and women to fulfill those roles for which God created them.

“Encourage” is perhaps too weak a word. As God told Cain he must resist the sin that desired to control him, he also told Eve that Adam must resist her. Conversely, a pretender to authority who actively disrupts a righteous priesthood or family should also be resisted. Any man who attempts to command another man’s wife as if she were his own is an interloper, and the woman has no obligation to obey him. When possible, she should respond by respectfully referring him to her husband.

Numbers 3:12

...that openeth the matrix... The 27:1 ratio of sons to firstborn sons (See Numbers 3:43.) means that “openeth the matrix” can only be a colloquial expression. The firstborn is not the firstborn of his mother, but of his father.

Numbers 3:39

All that were numbered of the Levites... If you add up the numbers given for the individual clans of the Levites, you arrive at 22,300, but here Moses says that there were only 22,000. The difference is traditionally understood to be made up of the firstborn of Levi. Those could not be used to substitute for the firstborn of the rest of Israel and so they were not counted in this final tally. If this tradition is correct, then the average Levite man had approximately seventy-four sons! If we assume roughly equal numbers of sons and daughters were born, then each Levite father must have had more than one hundred and forty children by at least ten—and probably more than twenty—wives. All of Israel at that time was heavily polygynous, but these, the most righteous of the twelve tribes, must have been nearly one hundred percent polygamists. (See the table below.)

Numbers 3:43

And all the firstborn males... The total number of males, aged twenty and over, and leaving out the Levites, was 603,550. The total number of firstborn males, aged one month and over, and leaving out the Levites, was 22,273. Assuming that the number of firstborn sons who died before their siblings might be roughly equal to the number of firstborn sons who would not yet have reached twenty years and so would not have been counted in the military census, we can use these numbers to calculate an approximate average number of sons per household by simply dividing one by the other. 603,550 divided by 22,273 equals 27.09783 or an average of twenty-seven sons per household!

Table 9: Israelite males per household

A. Levite males	22300
B. Levite firstborn	300
C. Males per Levite household	74 (C=A/B)
D. Non-Levite males	603550
E. Non-Levite firstborn	22273
F. Males per non-Levite household	27 (F=D/E)

This means that, while Israel lived in the wilderness in the very presence of YHWH for nearly forty years with Moses receiving instruction directly from God, monogamy was an extreme rarity, and God made not a single comment about it. It is possible that some of Israel’s firstborn sons were killed in the final plague in Egypt, but Exodus 11:7 seems to preclude the deaths of any but a small minority. Even if half of all Israelite households directly defied God by not marking their door posts, the numbers still indicate that the average family consisted of more than seventy children among the Levites and thirty among the rest of Israel. Whether the logically necessary disparity between the numbers of married men and married women was produced by the hard life that Israel had led in Egypt, to the plague against the firstborn, or to some other factor is almost irrelevant. When Israel was at their closest to righteous perfection¹⁴² they were overwhelmingly polygamists. That this state of affairs did not change later in their wilderness sojourn or even in the Promised Land is evident from the stories of the Judges.

¹⁴² Many teachers make much of the fact that Israel frequently complained and rebelled against God while in the wilderness. It is certainly true that they were not perfect and were sometimes bizarrely ungrateful. However, during that time, God responded to their sins immediately and harshly. If they had been even half as rebellious as most Christians are today, they would not have survived a single week in such proximity to God’s wrath.

Naso: Numbers 4:21-7:89

Numbers 5:6

When a man or woman shall commit any sin... Every person is responsible for his own sin. Although women tend to be more susceptible than men to certain kinds of deception due to a different set of typical strengths and weaknesses, they are not moral children to be held unaccountable for their actions.

Numbers 5:11-31

To many readers, this is one of the most mystifying passages in all of the Torah. God does not normally prescribe physical trials, such as the one described here, for establishing guilt. While some pagan cultures have depended almost exclusively on such trials—medieval duels and witch trials are familiar examples—they are almost completely absent from the scriptures. A detailed examination, however, will show that this passage is much more than a trial by fire. It might be one of the most profoundly symbolic passages in the Torah. The test of a suspected adulteress, or *Sotah*, might seem barbaric to our modern sensibilities, but it is actually a message of hope. The Accuser stands against us, but our High Priest washes away our crimes with his own blood. The most important symbolism is in the clay jar and the actions of the priest. The clay jar is the Messiah's physical body, fragile and hollow. (Paul used this same analogy for the body in 2 Corinthians 4.) The water is his spirit, and the dust is his blood.

The jealousy offering was set in the hands of the accused as if to say that, if she was guilty, then the sin was hers alone, but the jar remained in the hands of the priest, because Yeshua as our High Priest willingly gave his life for ours. The priest had the woman speak an oath of innocence and an accompanying curse for guilt, and then, like God recording our deeds in the annals of Heaven, he wrote it into a book. He then took some of the water from the jar, stained red by the dust saturated by the blood of countless sacrifices, and washed the ink from the book into the jar, just as the blood of Yeshua washed away all record of our sin and took upon himself the curse that was rightfully ours. If the woman had confessed to her sin and repented then there was no need to continue. If she had sworn truthfully to her innocence and continued the trial, then the bitter water containing the "sin" of the tabernacle dust and the curse from the book would do her no harm and exonerated her of all wrongdoing. She was free from the accusation and could return to her husband cleared of guilt. But if she was, in fact, guilty and had sworn to her innocence, then, just as taking communion unworthily brings us under a curse, she would become cursed by the water and by her oath. She would become diseased and barren, as one who knows of Yeshua's sacrifice but rejects it as unnecessary, claiming innocence on his own account.

In light of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, we can see one more great truth in this trial. Even if the woman was guilty of adultery, if she confessed and

repented, and endured the trial anyway, trusting in God's mercy or judgment, then she would also be found not guilty by God. We are all guilty of adultery against him, but Yeshua's blood washes away our guilt if we are willing to repent and throw ourselves on his mercy.

Numbers 5:12

If any man's wife go aside... God pointedly does not say, "If any woman's husband go aside..." The same pattern is evident in all biblical discussions of marriage, sex, and adultery. This is because it is impossible for a man to commit adultery against his wife by the mere act of sexual intercourse with another woman. The nature of the marriage relationship is such that the man must have exclusive sexual access to his wife, but the woman does not necessarily have exclusive sexual access to her husband.

...and commit a trespass against him... The sin is committed against her husband and not against the marriage or directly against God (although all sins are against God in some respect).

Numbers 5:13-16

...and there be no witness against her... If there is no evidence of a crime, only suspicion, then no one but God can judge guilt or prescribe punishment. The husband in this case could not rightfully divorce his wife simply because he suspected her of adultery. If there was no evidence and no eye witness, then the fact of her guilt could only be tried by God himself.

...and he shall bring an offering for her... It is important that the husband—the woman's accuser—and not the woman provided the jealousy offering. The jealousy offering is a form of guilt offering. It could be that he is the one in sin by unjustly suspecting his wife. He is also her head, and no head could be completely free of an infection present in some part of the body.

Numbers 5:18

...and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands... The removal of her head covering symbolizes the removal of her husband's protection and authority so that she holds her sin and fate in her own hands. A husband has the authority to intercede with God on his wife's behalf as Moses did for Israel in the wilderness. God's judgment must always go through him to reach the woman unless he steps aside and removes his protection or she rejects it.

Numbers 5:19

...gone aside to uncleanness... Uncleanness refers to something off limits, and not necessarily dirty or filthy although that is also true in this case. Once a woman is married, all other men become sexually off limits.

Numbers 5:31

Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity... Subjecting one's wife to this trial could not possibly engender good will within a marriage, but in many cases it might be a better solution than allowing a spirit of jealousy to germinate into bitterness and hatred.

Numbers 6:2

When either man or woman shall separate themselves... A Nazarite vow is taken to consecrate one's life for service to God, usually for a definite period of time. Men and women both may take such a vow. Some have argued that examples of women serving as deacons and otherwise occupying special offices of service to God demonstrate an essential equality of spiritual authority between men and women. However, the entirety of scripture very clearly demonstrates the opposite. A Nazarite holds no authority and, in fact, makes himself to be a servant, which is the literal meaning of "deacon." Everyone, male and female, has a special role to play in serving God. That does not mean that everyone is to be a bishop, rabbi, or priest. There are uncountable services to be performed for God and his people that do not require any special authority over them. Being called a Nazarite, a deacon, or a deaconess no more implies a position of authority than does being a volunteer at a soup kitchen.

Numbers 6:5

...let the locks of the hair of his head grow. Long hair is a mark of being under the authority of man. That the Nazarite was forbidden to cut his hair during the period of his vow implies that he had placed himself under the authority of the High Priest or some other human representative of God.

Numbers 6:9-11

...and he hath defiled the head of his consecration... He has not sinned by merely being in the presence of a dead body, however, the head covering formed by his hair has been tainted. He is to let the tainted hair grow out away from his scalp and then shave it completely off on the seventh day. On the eighth day, he is to bring a blood offering as a substitute covering. This implies that there is more to long hair than mere symbolism, that there is a real spiritual dynamic involved in the wearing of both long hair and fabric head coverings.

Numbers 6:18

And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation... Shaving his head marks the end of his submission to whatever human spiritual authority under which he has been employed throughout his vow. A captive war bride also shaves her head, both as a practical measure against parasites and to symbolically remove the

authority of her parents or deceased husband. For this reason, I do not believe it would be appropriate for a married woman to undertake a Nazarite vow.

Be'halot'cha: Numbers 8:1-12:16

Numbers 8:2

When thou lightest the lamps... The Tabernacle priest's duty is to light the seven lamps of the Menorah, as it is a husband's duty to instruct and guide his wife.

...the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. The individual lamps of the Menorah represent different aspects of the Holy Spirit's role among God's people and of a wife's role in her family. Part of a wife's duty is to teach her young children and to exemplify God's Spirit and her husband's laws in his house. "Over against the candlestick" refers to those things on the other side of the tabernacle. If you were to walk into the tent, you would see the Menorah on the left and the Showbread Table on the right. The Altar of Incense would be straight ahead and the Holy of Holies beyond that. The Menorah gave light to the whole interior, but especially to the Showbread Table and the loaves of bread, which, in the context of the family, represents the firstborn son and the other children, respectively.

Numbers 8:13-19

And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron... God reiterates that all the firstborn of Israel belong completely to him, but that he exchanged them for the Levites. Just as a non-Hebrew slave and all his future progeny may be purchased permanently, so the Levites and all their children remain God's personal possession forever. He then chose to assign them to Aaron and his sons.

Numbers 10:28

...according to their armies... Everything about Israelite society was organized patriarchally according to God's command. Military commands, ministries, kingship, courts, land grants, encampments, families, and inheritances were all organized around fathers.

Numbers 11:20

...until it comes out of your nostrils... God became Israel's husband at Sinai when they agreed to his *ketubah* on the stone tablets. As their husband, he agreed to rule them, shelter them, and provide for them. This is a pattern for the obligations of all men toward their wives. In this incident, Israel complained about the nature of God's provision. God's response makes it clear that he considered his obligation fulfilled through the manna, which was certainly adequate for nutrition and probably for enjoyment as well. According to Jewish tradition, the manna could taste like anything you wanted. He did not owe Israel meat or fish or vegetables, nor did they deserve those things. A good husband will desire his family to thrive, but his bare obligation ends at sufficient provision for survival.

Numbers 11:26

...and the spirit rested upon them. God uses whom he wills. He did not ask Moses' permission before speaking through Eldad, Medad, or Miriam. It matters not to him what we think of his messengers or their wealth, sex, or other earthly status. The names of these two men mean "God has loved" and "love."¹⁴³ God is much more likely to use those who, by their love for him and his Law, make themselves available to him.

Numbers 11:29

Would God that all the LORD's people were prophets... Moses did not say he wished all the Lord's men to be prophets, but all of the Lord's *people*: men, women, and children. There are prophets and prophetesses throughout Scripture. It is important to understand that, unlike priest, king, or judge, the office of prophet carries no special authority of its own. The prophet's words carry ultimate authority when he speaks for God, but he is just another man at all other times.

Numbers 11:33

...the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people... God had promised his new bride that he would provide for her, and he did so faithfully. When she complained about the manner of his providence, Israel should not have been surprised that he responded harshly. Ingratitude is an unappealing characteristic in anyone, but especially within the context of an intimate relationship. Expressions of thankfulness and restraint from grumbling will go a long way toward happiness in marriage.

Numbers 12:1

...the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. Literally "the Cushite woman." The land of Cush was not in Arabia, but across the Red Sea in Africa, hence the translation as Ethiopian. Although much of Arabia and Mesopotamia was once occupied by descendants of Cush, they migrated south and west from the Tower of Babel and apparently came to live primarily in East Africa and possibly at the southern extremities of the Arabian Peninsula. Midian, the ancestor of Zipporah the Midianite, was a son of Abraham by Keturah, and so was not even a Hamite, let alone a Cushite, and his descendants lived at the opposite end of Arabia in the north. Jewish tradition says that Moses spent some time in Ethiopia either as a fugitive or at the head of an Egyptian army. In either case, he was supposed to have attained some political power there and possibly married an Ethiopian before he fled to Midian. I do not know if that was the woman meant here. It seems to me that this was a new addition to Moses' house, or else the objection would have been heard much earlier. Whether this was a wife from many years earlier or only recently

¹⁴³ Or "loving," according to *Strong's*.

acquired from the mixed multitude of the Exodus, there is little doubt in my mind that Moses was a polygamist.

If Moses married this woman during the Exodus, then it is safe to assume she was a believer even if she was not a natural born Israelite. Like the rest of the mixed multitude, she was a grafted citizen, one of God's people despite her parentage.

Numbers 12:3

...Moses was very meek... Moses' polygyny was not inspired by any sense of superiority or arrogance. He was the epitome of meekness, yet still found cause to marry two women.

Numbers 12:4

...and unto Miriam... God appoints whomever he wills to be his prophets. Women in scripture appear primarily in two extra-familial ministry roles, servant and prophetess, neither of which bear inherent authority.

Numbers 12:10

...Miriam became leprous, white as snow... Miriam spoke against Moses because of his dark skinned wife, and she was punished with a disease that turned her skin stark white. While we have no way of knowing for certain Miriam's specific complaint, the punishment prompts me to conclude that the offense was related to race. God is no respecter of persons, but of spirits and behaviors. The Ethiopian woman was not the first non-Hebrew to meet God's approval, nor would she be the last. Rahab was also a descendant of Ham, yet God used her to teach us about salvation, and she even became an ancestor of the Messiah.

Why Aaron was not similarly struck, I do not know for certain. Perhaps it was because, as Moses' older brother and as the High Priest, he had at least some authority from which to speak, or because leprosy would have made him unfit for his office. However, Miriam's name means "rebellious," and I think it very likely that God knew her heart and saw something much more dangerous than what he saw in Aaron's.

Numbers 12:13

And Moses cried unto the LORD... Moses, as the head of Miriam's tribe and of the entire nation, pleaded her case before God. Such intercession is one of the functions of the covering of headship. Miriam almost certainly had a husband, but he is not mentioned, whether because he died earlier or because he is simply not germane to the story.

Shlach: Numbers 13:1-15:41

Numbers 13:2

Send thou men... God commanded Moses to send only men into Canaan as spies. The absurdity of radical feminists who say that women can do anything men can do hardly needs refutation. God's purpose in sending men and not women is obvious. Notice also that he once again referred to the divinely ordained patriarchal structure of Israel: "Of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man..."

God wanted chief men, who were probably beyond their physical prime. The mission was not to be a surprise attack, but rather a fact finding expedition, requiring wisdom and intelligence as much as strength and stealth. Perhaps more importantly, they were sent to lay claim to the land, and only men of authority could act in the name of the tribes. No man of Levi was included in the twelve because Levi had no inheritance in the land, and so no Levitical leader was required to seal their claim.

Numbers 14:4

Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt. Security—or rather the feeling of security—is among the foremost emotional needs of women. Unfortunately, it is not something that a husband can always provide. In this case, although God had promised Israel victory and real security, they sought to reject God in favor of a mere man who would return them to Egypt where they could *feel* safe in the familiarity of slavery. Their fear allowed their desire for control—another weakness of women as shown in Genesis 3:16—to overcome their faith in their husband. The lapse and the ensuing wilderness experience ultimately cost them far more than they had feared to lose by pressing on.

Numbers 14:12

I will smite them... God was not threatening divorce, but neither was his intent anything close to conciliatory. Because his bride doubted him, he was ready to destroy almost all of Israel and begin again with just Moses.

Numbers 14:16

Because the LORD was not able... A man's reputation in his house carries over into everything he does. A wise electorate examines a would-be leader's home life because how a man governs his home will tell them how he will govern a people. A well ordered house was a prerequisite for leadership of God's people for thousands of years, and it is a standard to which God holds even himself.

Numbers 14:18

The LORD is longsuffering... God is at times harsh, but he is not waiting to strike down anyone who makes a mistake. Husbands should also be patient and forgiving with their wives, and parents so with their children.

...by no means clearing the guilty... God is longsuffering, not *eternally* suffering. He will not allow rebellion to continue unchecked, and neither should a father, husband, or parent. Sometimes one in authority must withdraw his protection as the husband does in the trial of a wife suspected of adultery. (See Numbers 5:11-31.) He must allow his charges to suffer the consequences of their actions, and he must sometimes initiate those consequences. “For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth...”

Numbers 14:19-20

Pardon, I beseech thee... Moses again demonstrates the power of intercession by one in authority. Parents have this power to intercede on behalf of their children, and husbands have it to intercede on behalf of their wives. If the subject of their authority is in willing submission, that power is magnified.

Numbers 14:21-24

Surely they shall not see the land... Rebellion has consequences. Because of Moses intercession, God did not destroy the guilty immediately, but neither did he allow them to see the Promised Land. They wandered in the desert until that entire generation had died out but for a few men. A husband’s intercession for his wife cannot save her from herself. If she continues to place herself in harm’s way, she will continue to suffer the consequences. Eventually she must be cut off from her family.

...because he had another spirit with him... Moses’ intercession was more effective for Caleb and Joshua because they were not in rebellion. They trusted God and accepted Moses’ authority, and so they were the only two of their entire generation to cross the Jordan. A wife, who accepts her husband’s covering and obeys him, even when it is inconvenient or distasteful, will be rewarded for her faithfulness. He will be more able to protect her physically within the laws of his house and spiritually within God’s Torah.

Numbers 14:31-35

But your little ones...them will I bring in... Because of Israel’s rebellion God withdrew a portion of his blessing from the adult population, but he kept his covering over the children. The rebellion was not theirs, and—although they suffered in the wilderness with their parents—they realized the promise that their parents forfeit.

Divorce is ugly and should be reserved for a last resort. Unfortunately, it remains an occasional necessity, and questions of child custody are almost always difficult and painful. There is no single solution for all situations, and the best interests of

everyone involved are too subjective and variable to posit ironclad templates. From the biblical evidence it appears that the children conceived of a forbidden relationship would more frequently remain with the mother, while children conceived of normal relationships in which the mother was divorced for cause would remain with the father. This arrangement provides for a cleaner and more peaceful inheritance.

Numbers 14:43

...therefore the LORD will not be with you. Israel refused to advance into Canaan until God ordered them into the wilderness instead. Afterwards they disobeyed God again by backtracking and attempting to enter Canaan anyway. It is not enough to obey when it suits our own desires. Obedience means nothing unless it is difficult. A wife who obeys her husband's order to enjoy a day of shopping does nothing worthy of praise. On the other hand, the woman who follows her husband into the mission field or who wears a hated head covering or abandons old friends for his sake—she is truly a treasure worth keeping and rewarding.

Numbers 14:45

Then the Amalekites came down... They left the protection of God's covering by their disobedience, and they suffered the consequences. So it is with a woman who refuses to remain under her husband's company, but insists on "living her life" in the world as "her own person."

Numbers 15:25

And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation... This is another example of someone in authority providing spiritual covering for his subordinates. The efficacy of the atonement depends on the submission of the people and the faith of the one who atones. If the people did not act in ignorance or if they did not repent as a whole, the priest would be unable to cover them. Likewise, if the priest was apostate or a usurper, then his covering would be no more effective than a cheese cloth raincoat.

(See also Numbers 16:27.)

Numbers 15:30-31

But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously... There is no sacrifice in the Torah to cover deliberate rebellion. Atonement comes then only by the grace of God. Even so, his forgiveness depends on our willing submission to his judgment—not merit or incantation or ritual, but submission. In the family, rebellion cannot be tolerated for long. The members must be submitted to the rule of the father or else eventually "that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

Numbers 15:38-40

...fringes in the border of their garments... The Israelites were to wear on the corners of their outer garments a tassel with a single blue thread to remind them of their covenant with God. The placement of this command in Deuteronomy 22 at first seems random until it is compared with the parallel command in Numbers 15. It is an outer symbol of the marriage of the people to their God, much as a wedding ring is commonly used today. It is a constant reminder of their responsibility for faithfulness to him demonstrated through obedience to his commands, and is to be worn on the outermost layer of clothing so as to be visible at all times.¹⁴⁴ In human relationships, it can be good that both husband and wife wear some outward token of their marriage covenant: to remind her of her duty to remain faithful to her husband alone and to warn others that she is married and under protection; to remind him of his duty to protect and provide for his house. A particularly appropriate way to advertise her faithfulness is to don a head covering in honor of his authority over her whenever she prays or prophesies, especially in public. If that head covering bears a mark peculiar to her husband's house, so much the better.

¹⁴⁴ Since the command says that God's people are to wear the fringes, or *tzitziyot*, "throughout their generations," many believers in Yeshua continue to wear them today as do devout Jews.

Korach: Numbers 16-18

Numbers 16:1

...the son of Levi... At least on the surface it would appear that Korah, as a Levite, had a better claim than most Israelites to participate in the priestly duties. God's anointing is not subject to vote or argument, however. Korah made the same mistake as Satan. He already had a great calling on his life in support of the Tabernacle, but that was not enough for him. He wanted the supreme spiritual calling in Israel.

...sons of Reuben... Like Korah, the other three leaders of this rebellion had a better claim to a position of authority than most other Israelites by virtue of their ancestor Reuben who had been the firstborn son of Israel. Unfortunately, Reuben forfeited his birthright possibly by the very same sin of rebellion. In lying with his father's concubine, he might have been attempting to usurp his father's place as head of the family. David's son, Absalom, used the same tactic in his tragic rebellion centuries later. (See 2 Samuel 16:21-22.)

Numbers 16:5

...even him whom he hath chosen... God constructed the world to function in a certain manner. Like any complex machine, Creation's functionality degrades as its components cease to function according to their original design. The extent of the dysfunction can be difficult to measure. For example, an automobile without brakes might travel along an uncrowded highway without incident. The driver only realizes his trouble when it becomes necessary to slow or stop. So it is with family structure, church organization, and civil government. As Western nations become more and more feminized, they are beginning to come apart at the seams. As backwards as the Muslim nations appear, they have a very distinct advantage in that feminism has not taken a significant hold within their borders or cultures. As these two civilizations clash, the conclusion appears to be foregone. The superior technology and wealth of Europe and North America enable them to win many battles even as their borders are flooded with Muslim and other immigrants who have no interest in adapting themselves to the native cultures. Instead they bring their own culture with them and destroy Western Civilization by forfeiture. Our politicians say that "we are fighting them over there so we don't have to fight them over here." Anyone with eyes to see can tell that they have no need to fight us anywhere. Until we excise the cancer of feminism from within our own people, we are committing cultural suicide. Our military adventures in the Middle East are the death throws of a very broken machine, and the Muslims need only bide their time to win.

Numbers 16:27

...and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. A man's actions involve his entire family. God frequently deals with families as units. If the patriarch sins, the entire house suffers.

Notice that Korah's sons are not included among the dead. I have heard of a rabbinic tradition that his sons had publicly renounced their father's actions and so were spared. Since they later wrote many of the Psalms, this seems like a reasonable conjecture. If correct, it provides an interesting contrast. Korah was destroyed for rebelling against godly authority, while his sons were spared because they stood against the ungodly. Like the midwives in Egypt, they were rewarded for disobedience.

(See also Numbers 15:25.)

Numbers 16:48

...between the dead and the living... This is another example of spiritual covering. It is within the authority of a high priest, a father, and a husband to stand between his family and spiritual attack. Fatherhood is not a *laissez faire* enterprise. To be effective, a father and husband must be vigilant and spiritually proactive.

Numbers 17:2

...a rod according to the house of their fathers... A rod or staff is an emblem of office. It marked its carrier as one with authority.

Numbers 17:5

...the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom. A rod of office is a barely disguised icon of male potency, a blossoming rod doubly so. God's chosen men will almost always be patriarchs, men with well-governed families.

Numbers 18:1

...the iniquity of your priesthood. God holds those in authority accountable for their actions, and the greater the authority, the greater the accountability. A father will suffer—both in this world and the next—for the misdeeds of those within his own house, and his family will suffer for his. A man who cannot govern his family should not be placed in charge of a congregation.

Numbers 18:9-10

...every male shall eat it. Only men were allowed to eat the sin and trespass offerings for the same reason that only a man may be a priest: only a man has the divinely ordained authority to cover the sins of his house. A house with a woman at its head is crippled because she cannot effectively provide the spiritual covering it requires. This is one of the reasons that Paul wrote a woman under the age of sixty

should not normally be considered a legitimate object of community financial support.¹⁴⁵ Many societal problems, such as high crime and high taxes (if I may be so redundant), could be greatly alleviated, if not solved outright, by denying public support to unwed mothers. Let them marry or else be brought under the roof of relatives.

Numbers 18:11

...and to thy daughters with thee... Only the daughters of Cohanim who still live in their fathers' houses may eat of the offerings. If she has married, then she has left her father's house for her husband's and is entitled to share in those resources instead.

Numbers 18:15

Every thing that openeth the matrix... "That openeth the matrix" is a literal translation of a colloquial expression. With animals, it was probably understood literally since there was no reliable means of determining paternity. With people, "firstborn" should always be understood to refer to the first male offspring of the father. If a man has children by two women, then only the firstborn of one of them must be redeemed in this manner.

¹⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 5:9-15

Chukat: Numbers 19:1-22:1

Numbers 20:1

...the people abode in Kadesh, and Miriam died there... Translating the names literally, these same words can read “the people abode in holiness, and rebellion died there.” The people’s subsequent complaining and pining for slavery in Egypt shows that they were not entirely living in holiness, nor had their rebellion died. Holiness, however, was the end goal of life in the wilderness. Surrender to fear at Kadesh Barnea sent them into the wilderness to live in the very presence of God until the rebellious adults all died.

Balak: Numbers 22:2-25:9

Numbers 22:33

Unless she had turned from me... Authority does not give one the right to command disobedience to God, nor does it confer superior knowledge, wisdom, or skills. If a man commands someone in his house (whether ass, servant, child, or wife) to defy God, then God will honor disobedience. This is not a license to disobey at every disagreement. Where there is legitimate room for varying interpretations, the higher authority must prevail. Only when there is no question, where boundaries are perfectly clear, may a wife openly disobey her husband or a child his parents.

Numbers 24:7

He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters... Water is primarily a euphemism for two things: God's Spirit and one's people. In this case, it refers to both. According to one meaning, God would scatter Israel across the world where some would assimilate, some remain hidden, and some grow openly. According to the second meaning, God would pour out his Spirit, bringing up seed for Abraham among all the nations.

Numbers 24:8

...the strength of an unicorn. Some commentators say that the unicorn is a phallic symbol of masculine power due to its single great horn; however it appears that "unicorn" is a misinterpretation. The animal in question was probably the extinct aurochs. None of this is to say that those great beasts were not frequently employed as icons of fertility. As exemplars of vitality and virility, they certainly were, only not for the same reason as the mythical unicorn.

Numbers 25:1-2

And Israel abode in Shittim... Throughout the Torah, shittim (acacia wood) represents humanity or flesh. The shittim planks used to build the Tabernacle were cut from trees that were carefully cultivated over many years in preparation for a spiritual existence. Here, however, the Israelites indulged in their lusts, pulling their spirits down into a fleshly existence. As they joined the daughters of Moab in the flesh, they also joined them in the spirit. They corrupted their religion and their diet. In the end, they joined themselves with a false god through their new consorts.

Notice that Israel did not give their daughters to the sons of Moab. Although the woman joins her husband's house, she brings her upbringing and her family connections with her. God did not only tell Israel to not give their daughters to pagan men, but also not to take pagan women for their sons.

Numbers 25:3-5

And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor. God has two cardinal rules of marriage:

1. A husband has exclusive sexual access to his wife.
2. A believer must not marry an unbeliever.

Israel violated the second rule by taking the daughters of Moab. That led them to violate the first rule by joining themselves to Baalpeor in violation of their covenant with Yahweh. The penalty was death by the hand of God and man.

Numbers 25:6-9

...in the sight of all the congregation... That Zimri felt himself safe in performing such an audacious act of defiance is evidence of widespread resentment for the restrictions on the people's lusts. He was not content to pursue his sin in private, but thought to make a public statement in favor of the world's golden rule, "Do what thou wilt." His actions were not unlike those of homosexuals who parade their sin before the whole world and proclaim their "gay pride." Just as Zimri publicly defied God and Moses, Phinehas publicly repudiated him in a most decisive manner, putting an immediate stop to any who might follow the same path. No matter what people felt or desired in their hearts, they conformed their outward behavior to God's laws, and God withdrew their punishment. It does not matter what we think of God's restrictions against marrying unbelievers, against fornication, against sodomy. What matters is that we obey him.

Pinchas: Numbers 25:10-30:1

Numbers 25:11-13

...he was zealous for my sake... *Phinehas* means “bronze mouth” or “serpent’s mouth.” The two mean essentially the same thing. The episode of the bronze serpent raised up for repentance and healing demonstrates a strong spiritual link between the metal and the creature. They are both symbols of judgment.¹⁴⁶ In this incident, Phinehas acted as the teeth of the serpent, carrying out judgment against the worst perpetrators of rebellion in the camp. By publicly and violently enforcing God’s standards of sexual purity, by preventing the corruption of Israel’s children, he brought God’s blessing of peace on his own children for generations.

Numbers 25:14-15

...a prince of a chief house... Zimri and Cozbi were both children of minor noble houses in their respective nations. According to *Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions*, Zimri means “my music” while Cozbi means “my lie.” I suspect that Zimri was probably a favorite of his father and might have thought himself more significant than in fact he was. He intended to make a name for himself by forming a political alliance between the two houses. Cozbi, on the other hand, had no intention of forming alliances. Her only goal was to separate Israel from Yahweh and thereby bring about their destruction. She blinded Zimri with false praise and encouraged his pretensions. Beware of a flatterer. Be doubly cautious of a flattering woman for a woman’s weapons of choice are not steel but words and guile.

Numbers 25:16-18

Vex the Midianites, and smite them. God confirmed that Cozbi’s motive was not love or even lust, but death. Although both Midian and Moab sought the destruction of Israel, it was Cozbi’s people who developed the strategy of guile through women.

Numbers 26:2

...throughout their fathers’ house... God reiterated his will for his people to be organized according to their fathers, i.e. patriarchally and patrilineally.

...all that are able to go to war in Israel. Once again, this census was only of fighting men aged twenty and over. By God’s command, no women were counted among the armed forces of Israel.

¹⁴⁶ Bronze is symbolic of judgment throughout the Torah. The tribe of Dan, whose name means “judge” and who Jacob said would judge his brothers, is called a serpent beside the path, waiting to strike.

Numbers 26:33

And Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons... Women are rarely mentioned by name in biblical genealogies, but God lavishly honored the plea of Zelophehad's daughters by recording their names, their story, and their father's name several times. If their names indicate their characters, then they covered the available spectrum. One daughter was named "disease," another "partridge," and another "favorable."¹⁴⁷

Numbers 26:46

And the name of the daughter of Asher was Sarah. This woman was mentioned by name thrice in the genealogies of Israel, here, Genesis 46:17, and again in 1 Chronicles 7:30. Scripture provides no other information about her, however. As with so many others, we must deduce her significance from her name. *Strong's* defines her name as "superfluity," while *BDB* has it "the prince breathed." Whichever is correct, it seems that the intent is to convey her superiority over other women, that she somehow earned her literary immortality through her skills, knowledge, strength, or character. Her name was not recorded simply because she was the daughter of Asher, but because she was an outstanding example of womanhood in Israel.

Numbers 27:7

The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. There is no biblical prohibition against women speaking out in public, bringing a suit to court, or standing up for themselves or others. Although women are expected to live under the authority of a man, God never treats them as non-persons or subhuman. They may appeal to higher authorities than their husbands when necessary, and they may approach God, his priests, or other rulers directly so long as they always do so with proper respect to their husbands or fathers.

Thou shalt surely give them a possession... Just as women may speak for themselves, they may own and inherit property.

Numbers 27:8-11

If a man die, and have no son... These verses define the line of inheritance of a man who dies without a son. If he had a son, of course, that son would inherit all of the man's possessions at the time of his death. His daughters would have received smaller portions as their dowry. If they were not married at the time of his death, it would be his son's responsibility to ensure his sisters are properly dowered. If he had no son...

1. His daughters would inherit as sons, and the property would be added to their dowries. If he had no daughters...

¹⁴⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs. *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definitions*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

2. His brothers would inherit, essentially returning his property to his father. If he had no brothers...
3. His father's brothers would inherit, essentially returning his father's inheritance to his grandfather. Presumably his uncle's sons would inherit if their father had died. If his father had no brothers...
4. Inheritance keeps going up through his ancestry until another male relative is found.

The only time a woman inherited directly was when she had no brothers. A man's property would never be inherited by his sister or aunt. If a daughter inherited land from her father, then she would be unable to marry a man from outside her father's tribe. If she had already married an outsider, then her father's property would revert to one of his brothers.

Numbers 27:16

...the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation. It was certainly within God's power to place a woman at the head of Israel. He is not restricted in any way by mere cultural norms. He did not hesitate to condemn idolatry, working on the Sabbath, eating pork, and numerous other "cultural norms." Why should he hesitate to place a woman at the head of a nation? In fact, he has done so at rare times, and although those queens and judges did not rule without conflict, they were not automatically rejected by their people. YHWH is the God of the spirits of *all* flesh, whether male or female. He knows better than we what is best for our spiritual and physical health. Yet he almost always places legitimate authority onto the shoulders of men, not women.

Numbers 27:20

And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him... The scriptures consistently speak of honor and glory as tangible things that can be transferred, spread out, and worn like a garment. I wonder if the bestowing of a mantle was a part of this ceremony.

Numbers 30:1

And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel... Some have said that Paul was not condoning patriarchy when he wrote that husbands are the heads of their wives, because "head" does not necessarily refer to authority. Besides, the ancient Greeks did not understand that the body was literally controlled by the head, so Paul's metaphor could not possibly have meant that the husband should control his wife in any way. Since the head of a river is its source, it could simply mean that he is her "source." The truth is that such an interpretation is the pinnacle of absurdity. The ancient Greeks *did* understand that the head commanded the body, as they had studied the Torah for inspiration and curiosity for centuries. Paul, perhaps the greatest Torah scholar of his day, certainly knew that *rosh*, the Hebrew word for head, was frequently used by God and Moses to refer to

those in authority over families, cities, clans, tribes, and nations. Are we really to believe that Hillel, Shammai, and Paul were too stupid to understand the very plain, literal meaning of the texts to the study of which they had dedicated their entire lives?

Matot: Numbers 30:2-32:42

Numbers 30:2

If a man vow a vow unto the LORD... A vow is a promise to deliver or dedicate something to another, particularly to God. In Genesis 28 Jacob made a vow when he promised to give God a tenth of all he had. In Judges 11 Jephthah made a vow to make an offering of the first thing to come out of his door.

An oath is an affirmation of fact or a promise to perform. It is a much wider concept, and in fact, vows can be considered a subset of oaths. A curse is an oath that proclaims a future calamity. A blessing is an oath that proclaims a future benefit. In Genesis 17 God swore an oath to make Abraham's descendants into many nations.

Vows and oaths are serious things whether made deliberately or frivolously. They bind a man's soul. Once made, they are to be fulfilled, and there will be consequences for breaking them. Those consequences are not always obvious. For instance, after Jacob delayed fulfilling his vow to give a tithe, God began to take away from him. His favorite wife, Rachel, died. His daughter, Dinah, was raped. His favorite son, Joseph, was taken to Egypt.

Wedding vows are a nearly universal and appropriate custom. God's promises of provision, guidance, and security and Israel's promises of obedience and worship were a type of wedding vow:

Lev 26:12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

This is a tradition worth continuing; however we should be very careful of its form and content. Wedding vows should usually be limited to those things which are legitimate responsibilities of husbands and wives. A groom's promise to love and keep his bride, a bride's promise to serve and obey her groom, those are thoroughly biblical. A groom's promise "to forsake all others" is not sinful on its face, but it might be unwise. First, it categorically eliminates one avenue through which God might work in a man's community. Second, it confers on the wife authority over her husband, which God did not intend. In God's design, a husband does not owe his wife exclusivity any more than God owes Israel or Judah exclusivity. He is as free to make a covenant with Nineveh as with Jerusalem, and as Paul explained, the relationship between husband and wife is patterned after that between God and his people.

As a man, you must be very careful of the words you speak. You will be held to them one way or another.

Numbers 30:3

...and bind herself by a bond... Women have authority over their own lives to bind their souls by vows. Although her husband or father might have authority over her, she is an independent agent. As with any other earthly authority, she thinks, decides, and acts for herself, though she may be over-ruled by one higher. The coverage or headship of a man does not mean that he is to be a micromanager of his family's lives. He is to be a leader, not a tyrant.

...being in her father's house in her youth... This law presumes that a woman no longer in her youth will also no longer be in her father's house. Although some men are certainly designed to remain single, I doubt the same is true for women.

Despite the prevailing civil law, the real authority of a man over his daughter does not end on her eighteenth birthday or whatever age local ordinance suggests. His authority ends on the day she leaves his house for her husband's. A young woman should never be without the covering of a man. If she is orphaned, then she should live in her grandfather's or uncle's or brother's house until she marries. If she is widowed, then she should remarry if still young enough to be a good wife.

Numbers 30:4-5

But if her father disallow her... A father has veto authority over the vows of his daughter. He has the right to supervise her choices and the responsibility to protect her from those that will inflict consequences too severe for her to bear. This does not mean that he need validate each and every vow she makes—every child must learn by trial and error—but he must be aware of her activities and her words.

...in the day that he heareth... If her father does not cancel her vow on the same day he hears of it, then it will stand. He is not allowed to wait and see what will come of her words before he acts on them. It is the age-old legal principle of "silence is acceptance."

Numbers 30:6-8

But if her husband disallowed her... When a daughter becomes a wife, her father's authority over her is transferred to her husband. She leaves her father's house and joins her husband's house. He now has the same authority over her words that her father had before. That does not mean a husband should micromanage every act and word of his wife, but he should be aware of what is happening with her. He must be prepared to protect her by interceding for her when she speaks unwisely.

Numbers 30:9

But every vow of a widow... Women are not non-persons. They may own property, do business, and make contracts. When a woman is young, she is under the authority of her father. When she marries, she comes under the authority of her husband. If her husband dies, then she may remain unmarried on her own, or she may join the house of some other man. If her husband died childless, then she must marry one of his close relatives to produce an heir for him. If she chooses to remain

unmarried, then she will have neither the protection nor the oppression—depending on her point-of-view and her past realities—of a man’s covering. God and his Creation will hold her accountable for every word she speaks.

...and of her that is divorced... The same holds true for a divorced woman. If she remains unmarried, then she must fulfill her vows. No man may cancel them for her.

Numbers 30:10-15

And if she vowed in her husband’s house... If a widowed or divorced woman made a vow while still under the authority of her former husband, then his ruling or lack of ruling on that vow will stand after she leaves his house. Even if he has died, her vow has already been forgiven.

Numbers 30:16

...between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter... God specifically commanded that a man have authority to veto the words of his wife or daughter because women tend to be more emotionally motivated, to make decisions based upon the heart rather than upon reason and law. (That is not a bad thing. Femininity is a feature, not a design flaw. It is what makes women so valuable to men.) He did not give us these laws to keep women down, to perpetuate their oppression. He gave these laws for the protection of women.

Do not suppose, however, that if an emotional man marries a rational woman, she may cancel his vows or ignore his headship over her. The ability of a man to cancel the vows of his wife is not an indulgence or a merely pragmatic matter, but a spiritual law of Creation. His authority is recognized by spirits and by God, and the power to cancel vows is inherent in that authority. A woman may attempt to cancel her husband’s vows all she likes, but she can no more do so than a driver can stop an automobile by pressing on the gas pedal.

Numbers 31:17

Now therefore kill every male among the little ones... The Midianites played a key role in the plot to destroy Israel by subverting their religion. Jewish tradition says that the Midianites were the masterminds behind this plan, as their relationship to Moses through his wife and father-in-law gave them greater insight to the character of Israel and Israel’s God. Their punishment was to lose all authority on Earth, and there is only one way to do that. The nationality of a child is determined by the nationality of his father. So long as one male descendant survives, the nation survives, and with it, the authority and inheritance of that nation. In order to permanently end the spiritual authority of a nation, every male and every widow (any non-virgin woman is a potential mother of a reborn nation) must be killed. Many of these women were guilty of crimes against Israel and God, but many of them were not. This was not a criminal court, however. It was the last action in a

battle for survival. On a spiritual level, Midian was determined to destroy Israel, and therefore the nation of Midian had to be destroyed.

Numbers 31:18

But all the women children... According to the previous verse, these “children” would have included all female virgins of whatever age. The victorious army had thought to spare all of the women and children of Midian, but God’s purpose was to destroy the nation. That could only be accomplished by killing all males and non-virgin females. Most of these surviving women and girls would probably become maidservants to the daughters and wives of Israelites. Many would become concubines if they were of an appropriate age. A few would become adopted daughters. All would be encouraged to convert to Yahweh’s religion and eventually to become Israelites themselves.

Numbers 31:20

And purify all your raiment... Raiment or “covering” represents spiritual authority. A leader, whether of nation or family, must be above reproach. To be effective, his covering must be righteous and pure.

Numbers 32:16-33

V16 – We will build sheepfolds... One of a man’s highest priorities in his house is to provide for the sustenance and security of his family. God’s law goes so far as to say that his wife is free to leave him if he fails to provide the minimum essentials. Plant your fields, build your house. Only then go off to war.

V17 – ...our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities... Service to God and his kingdom is a higher priority even than caring for one’s family. God has promised that if we obey him, then we will dwell in security.

V18 – We will not return to our houses... Lot was rewarded for his extreme generosity in putting the security of strangers before that of his own family. I cannot say that I would be as generous as Lot. Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were also rewarded for trusting in God for the security of their wives and children while they fought for the families of their fellow Israelites.

Masay: Numbers 33-36

Numbers 34:18

And ye shall take one prince of every tribe... Only men were ever chosen to represent the people at large. Here, a patriarch from each tribe was chosen to participate in the division of the land.

Numbers 34:29

These are they whom the LORD commanded... Men were not appointed to represent the tribes out of a misogynist bias on the part of the people or leadership, but at the command of God. Only men are designed to carry the spiritual authority required to represent a people before God and the spiritual principalities.

Numbers 36:1-4

And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes... Numerous other passages imply that a woman permanently joins her husband's tribe upon marriage, and this law makes it quite explicit. Not only does she join her husband's tribe, but all of her possessions do as well. If she inherited land from her father, then that land permanently changes tribe with her. If her husband gave her a certificate of divorce, then the land could return to her birth tribe, but not otherwise. If he died childless, then his near kin would have to marry her to ensure her land remains with her dead husband's tribe.

Numbers 36:6

Let them marry to whom they think best... Since these women had no father or brother to be their covering authority, they lived as widows or divorcees.

Numbers 36:8-9

And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance... The inheritances of Simeon and Levi were already scattered in Israel. To prevent the slow erosion of the remaining tribal boundaries, only brotherless women were allowed to inherit land from their fathers, and they were required to marry within their father's tribe.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ According to Jack Goody, the same principle was at work in the inheritance laws of ancient Ireland and Greece. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). 42

DEUTERONOMY – *Devarim*

Devarim: Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22

Deuteronomy 2:14-15

...the men of war were wasted out from among the host... When the twelve spies returned, the final decision on whether or not to proceed belonged to those who would do the fighting. It would not have mattered if the women and children feared so long as the men had courage. Since the men gave in to their fear, however, the entire nation suffered until God destroyed those without faith to trust him with the safety of their families.

Deuteronomy 2:34 & 3:6

...utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones... There were giants in this region previously,¹⁴⁹ and all the people were tainted with their blood. Rather than allow their cancer to spread and be forced to destroy everyone on earth as he had before, God selectively destroyed individual cities and nations. He replaced them with Ammon, Esau, and Israel. God did not give us laws regarding sexual purity only for his own aesthetics nor even for our individual health, although certainly those are important. He gave us those laws to maintain the salvageability of our people. Certain behaviors warrant destruction because those behaviors risk tainting the land and the nation beyond repair.

Deuteronomy 3:19

But your wives, and your little ones, and your cattle... As this passage so closely follows a summary of the destruction of Israel's fighting men and the utter destruction of Bashan and Sihon, it highlights the nature of Godly leadership. Israel's men were destroyed because they feared that God would not protect their children. Sihon's and Bashan's children were destroyed because they did not care what God would do. Finally, Reuben's, Gad's, and Manasseh's children were protected because they trusted and obeyed God. The lesson is the same in all three cases: Do what is right. Let God worry about the consequences.

Deuteronomy 3:21-22

...unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. God would not utterly destroy them, but he would remove their heads. They would cease to exist as peoples because all those who carried the name of their ancestors would be removed. Surviving women would be assimilated into Israel.

¹⁴⁹ One still remained as king of Bashan. See Deuteronomy 3:11.

V'etchanan: Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11

Deuteronomy 4:2

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you... God said that his laws are not a heavy burden. They are not beyond our capability. No mortal will ever be perfect, so we are all certain to violate the law at some point. However, on the whole, obedience is not very difficult. He also said that they are not beyond the sea or up in heaven so that they are too difficult to understand. Although there are many layers to Torah, and a complete understanding might be beyond us, the bare essentials of God's commands are quite simple. If God said, "Do not do this," then do not do this. If he said, "Do that," then do that.

Any of us who can read or who can listen to someone else read can find out for ourselves what God commanded. We do not have to be content with the words of men who claim to speak for God. We have his words directly. We are free to make whatever rules for ourselves we desire, however we are not authorized to say that they are God's laws. No man is authorized to change God's laws and anyone who attempts to do so has broken them already. Yeshua could not change them because he could not sin. Paul could not change them because he was only a man. Therefore, God's laws still stand as he gave them to Moses. You may say, "No one in my house will have two wives," or "In my house we will light a Sabbath candle before sunset," but you may not claim that God commands it.

If anyone says, "Thus saith the Lord," but his words are not in line with what was already commanded in the Torah, then that person is a liar. Either Yeshua said not a single letter or mark will pass away from the Torah in keeping with Deuteronomy 4:2, or else he said that we are now free to violate one or another of God's commands with impunity in direct violation of it. He is either sinless or a sinner. It cannot be both. Fortunately, we do not need to wonder. Matthew quoted Yeshua as saying, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Those rules for marriage and family life, which God gave to Moses, still apply today. The authority of a father over his children and a husband over his wife has not changed. The right of a man to take two wives, however distasteful it might be, still stands. This is not my command, but God's.

Deuteronomy 4:9

...teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons. Parents, God commanded you to teach his law to your children. You may teach them yourself, send them off to school, or hire a tutor, but you must ensure they learn it.

Deuteronomy 4:10

...the day that thou stoodest before the LORD... That event was a marriage ceremony between a God and his people. This is more than analogy. God created marriage in part to illustrate the relationship he desired with us.

...that they may learn to fear me... The fear of the Lord is not a cowering terror, although it may at times take that form. It is an intense desire to please and to obey, a deep respect as one might render a nuclear reactor. That does not mean we need to handle him with kid gloves, but rather the opposite. He gave us his Torah for our protection, not his. A technician at a power plant must wear the proper gear to protect himself, not to protect the reaction in the core. We must not treat God lightly because to do so would endanger our lives.

Men are not the all consuming fire that is God, but wives must still reverence and respect their husbands. Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands as to God. Paul and Peter both wrote that women should fear their husbands. They did not mean that she should grovel, only that she should obey and reverence him as the stronger and as the divinely appointed authority over her.

It would not be amiss to emphasize that men really are physically more powerful than women. A husband should love his wife and treat her gently, but men do not always behave as they should. Common sense dictates that one should treat a person who is stronger and more dangerous with more respect than he might treat a weaker person. It is not a matter of right or wrong nor of who deserves more respect. It is a simple matter of physical safety and rational self interest.

...that they may teach their children. Although both parents are responsible for teaching their children, the primary responsibility lies with the mother. She cares for them when they are too young to care for themselves, and she teaches them the rules of her husband's house. As they grow older, their father will take a more direct role in teaching them Torah, especially his sons.

Deuteronomy 4:26

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day... Adultery is punishable by death and therefore requires two witnesses to convict.

Deuteronomy 4:27

And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations... Although Israel perished "from off the land," God had mercy on them, and did not destroy them completely. He put them away for awhile, but promised to bring them back again.

Deuteronomy 4:30-31

...nor forget the covenant of thy fathers... God did not give his people a certificate of divorce authorizing them to form a new covenant with some other god. Normally, a man is required to give his wife a final divorce if he puts her away, but adultery is the one exception. Since she has committed a capital offense against her husband, any claim she has on him is void. He may put her away without returning

her dowry or allowing her the option of remarriage. God put Israel and Judah away for their adultery, but promised that he would take them back if they repented. “For the LORD thy God is a merciful God.”

Deuteronomy 4:34-39

Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation... God had two brides, Israel and Judah, within one nation. Although he wanted (and wants) to bring all nations into his house, he has chosen to do that through those he already has. When Israel committed adultery against him, he did not immediately seek to replace her with another. He put her away until she should repent, and he promised to draw her back to him. He is merciful and longsuffering, desiring to see his bride restored to honor.

...there is none else. Israel could have only one God. There could not be one god of heaven and another of earth and another of this or that. There is one God over all. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.” Although God chose not to take another nation for himself beside Israel, he forbade them to take another god altogether.

Deuteronomy 4:40

Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes... Because Yahweh is the only God in heaven and earth, Israel must obey his laws. They will live longer, more prosperous lives, not only because God will actively reward them, but also because his laws are designed to keep us aligned with the natural processes of Creation. The Torah is a subset of natural law. If you plant a seed, a plant will grow. If you obey God’s commands, your life will grow.

The same is true of the relationship of husband and wife. It does not matter if she is more capable or smarter or healthier than he. God designed us to function in a certain way, and our marriages and families will be happier and more stable if we purpose to live according to that function.

Deuteronomy 5:2-4

...God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The covenant that God made with Abraham was a betrothal. The covenant he made with all Israel at Horeb was a marriage. Although the betrothal was not made with the consent of the betrothed, the marriage was ratified “with you face to face.” He gave them one final opportunity to walk away. After Horeb, Israel could never be un-chosen.

Deuteronomy 5:6

...which brought thee out of the land of Egypt... I have heard of an eastern marriage tradition in which the groom leads his men in a mock raid to capture his bride from her father’s house. It is an appropriate tradition as it recalls God rescuing

his bride from Egypt. Notice that God did not go to live with his people in Egypt, but brought them out to live in his house.

Deuteronomy 5:7

Thou shalt have none other gods before me. God does not allow his people to worship other gods, nor should a husband allow his bride to serve another man as wife.

Deuteronomy 5:8

Thou shalt not make thee any graven image... Idols are only paint, wood, stone, or metal, yet God does not allow his people to worship them any more than he allows them to worship demons. Likewise, a woman should not fantasize about or dote on depictions of men other than her husband. That includes celebrities and fictional characters.

Deuteronomy 5:9-10

...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children... God does not actively punish children for the sins of their fathers, but he has created a universe in which a person's actions have consequences that affect all those around him. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good..." Fathers especially must be careful as their families depend on them.

Deuteronomy 5:11

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain... This command is, at least in part, against those who would claim divine authority for the commands of men, false prophets who add "Thus saith the Lord" to their own imaginings or to demonic lies. Jezebel did the same to her husband when she forged her husband's signature in order to steal another man's land. Wives must not presume to speak for their husbands without accurate knowledge or direction.

Deuteronomy 5:16

Honour thy father and thy mother... God does not command us to honor only our fathers or only our mothers. We owe both of them our greatest respect throughout our lives.

Deuteronomy 5:18

Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Throughout the Old Testament the word "adultery" is used to describe the action of a woman who has sexual relations with a man other than her husband. An unmarried and unbetrothed woman cannot commit adultery. A man can commit adultery with another man's wife, but not with an unmarried woman. If a man, whether married or not, lies with an unmarried woman,

they have committed fornication, not adultery. His punishment is a fine and marriage if her father desires it. Her punishment (in a moral society) is marriage or a greater difficulty in finding a good husband if her father rejects her paramour.

Deuteronomy 5:21

Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife... A person may not fantasize about owning something that cannot lawfully be his. The only common denominator between the items listed is that they already belong to someone else. There is a presumption that the owner is not willing to sell. An animal, servant, or house can be sold, and there is no sin in desiring to purchase them from your neighbor. You are not to desire to take them. A wife, however, cannot be sold away from her husband, whether he desires to sell her or not. He may divorce her, but he cannot then tell her to marry someone else, since, now divorced, she is free to decide such things for herself.

Deuteronomy 6:7

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children... We are commanded to teach our children to live by God's commands. Marriage to an unbeliever makes obedience to this command nearly impossible. The teachings of the two parents will necessarily be in conflict.

Deuteronomy 6:9

...upon the posts of thy house... The Torah is to be written on the posts of houses and the gates of towns as a reminder that all those within are to live by God's laws. Fathers are responsible for ensuring that their houses and towns are governed in accordance with Torah.

Deuteronomy 6:15

For the LORD thy God is a jealous God... We have no right to be jealous of the attention God might give to someone else. However, he has every right to be jealous of whatever service we might give to another God. The same is true with husbands and wives. Polyandry is forbidden by Torah, but polygyny is not. This means that, so long as a man continues to fulfill his responsibilities to each of his wives, they have no right to be jealous of the time or resources he might expend on another.

Deuteronomy 7:3

Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Do not corrupt your own house by bringing pagan women into it, and do not curse your daughter by sending her into a pagan house. Marriage is not a mission field. You are not permitted to marry a pagan, expecting to convert him. It does not matter how certain you are of success. God commands us not to do it.

This command assumes the authority of parents to take wives for their sons and to give their daughters as wives. They should not abuse that authority by forcing their children into hateful marriages, yet the authority is no less real. Note also that daughters, not sons, are taken and given due to the patrilineal nature of God's design for families and nations.

Deuteronomy 7:4

For they will turn away thy son from following me... In the previous verse, God commanded Israel not to take the daughters of pagans for their sons nor *to give their daughters to the sons of pagans*. Yet here, he only says "For they will turn away thy son." Such marriages will surely turn away daughters as well, and God cares about them very much. However, God's point seems to be that bringing pagan women into your houses will eventually lead astray your entire houses and also the nation. Witness Solomon's great folly.

So will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you... Many such marriages were made for the sake of diplomacy. Solomon, married the daughter of Pharaoh and other pagan women. In order to please them and keep peace in his house, he built holy places for them to worship their gods. In so doing, he brought division and disaster on Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9

...for ye were the fewest of all people. God did not rescue Israel from Egypt because they were such a great or deserving people, but simply because he had promised to do it. True love does not depend on beauty or perfect obedience, but on commitment. A good husband loves his wife when she is unable to serve him and even when she is unwilling. Infatuation waxes and wanes, but commitment and honor do not.

Ekev: Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25

Deuteronomy 7:12-8:9

...if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them... Feminists often complain that the Bible was written by men and for men at the expense of women. However, the actual words of Scripture do not readily cooperate with feminist theory. Marriage is a model of God's relationship with his people, and so most of my research and writing has focused on the Torah, the most detailed account of God relating directly with man. The rules in the Torah are not difficult to understand. They are "not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?" (Deuteronomy 30:12). They take time to learn and internalize, but not because they are complex or numerous. The laws of any small town in modern America are orders of magnitude more complex without even considering the volumes of county, state, and federal laws. Yet God has said that if we commit to keeping his Torah, then he will provide for us, protect and multiply us, and bless us in numerous ways. He does not demand perfection from us. He will not reject us for making mistakes, but only for systemic, purposeful rebellion. This is not a model of tyrannical domination, but of merciful love and providence. If this is patriarchy, then patriarchy is a very good thing.

v13-14 – ...the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land... A husband seeks to give his wife children and to expand the resources with which she provides feeds and clothes her house.

v15 – ...none of the evil diseases... He ensures the health of his house by observing Torah regarding hygiene, diet, and behavior. He makes God's laws to be the laws of his own house. If sickness comes, he intercedes and commands healing on behalf of his wife and children.

v16-24 – Thou shalt not be afraid of them. He ensures her security among other people and defends her reputation. He facilitates her work as mother and wife and removes those who would oppose her.

v25-26 – The graven images of their gods... He directs her away from temptations and deceptions, as a shepherd keeps his sheep from straying into vulnerability.

v2-3 – ...all the way which the LORD thy God led thee... He provides leadership, direction, and purpose for life.

v4 – Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee... He provides the resources necessary to clothe his wife and family.

v5 – ...as a man chasteneth his son... This verse is anomalous in that it is explicitly about the relationship between father and son and not that between husband and wife. If a man loves his son, he will discipline him.

v6 – Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments... He provides law and structure to his whole house.

v7 – ...a land of brooks of water... He works for the good and peace of his wife and family. He does not command or discipline for his own good, but for the good of the Kingdom of God and for those under his authority.

v8-9 – A land of wheat... He works for the security and abundance of his house. He wants to bless his wife with good things and not simply the bare minimum.

Deuteronomy 8:10-11

Continuing the analogy between the God-Israel and husband-wife relationships, there are two things that a wife owes her husband: praise and obedience. Both are aspects of respect.

v10 – ...then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God... According to Proverbs 31, she does her husband only good. According to Deuteronomy 8:10, that includes her speech.

v11 – ...keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes... She respects and obeys her husband's rules even when she disagrees with them and so long as they do not clearly violate God's rules.

Deuteronomy 8:17

My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. The mantra of the feminist movement has been that a woman can do anything a man can do. It is an obviously absurd belief, yet it persists. Even if cloning technology progresses to the point at which sexual reproduction is no longer strictly necessary, women will continue to need men for their spiritual covering and for the programming in the Y chromosome. Likewise, men will continue to need women for their companionship and distinctly feminine qualities. Neither can effectively function without the other.¹⁵⁰

Deuteronomy 8:20

...so shall ye perish... There are limits to the power of love to sustain a relationship. God's law demands that idolaters and many others be cut off from their people. Death is the punishment God prescribed for proven, witnessed adultery. If the adultery was not witnessed or the man cannot be identified for some reason, then the *sotah* trial or a divorce may be invoked. A man also has the option of forgiving his wife outright, which is almost always preferable to divorce.

Deuteronomy 9:25-29

I prayed therefore unto the LORD... One in legitimate authority may intercede before God for his subordinates. He acts as a shield, a covering, between his people and God's wrath.

¹⁵⁰ Someone will inevitably claim that I have said men are like gods to women. It is a symptom of the same mental or spiritual pathology which claims men and women are equal. Mental, in that it fails to comprehend the nature and limitations of analogy; spiritual in that it seeks any excuse to reject God's plan for authority and accountability.

Deuteronomy 10:15

Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers... Fathers carry an enormous responsibility. Their covenants are binding and their sins and righteousness can affect their descendants for generations.

Re'eh: Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17

Deuteronomy 11:26-32

...a blessing and a curse... Crossing the Jordan marked the beginning of the Israel's life in God's house, as a bride crossing the threshold of her new husband's house. God did not promise Israel eternal bliss from the moment they set foot in the Land. In fact, he promised them both blessing and curse. If they would keep his commands, then he assured them a blessed existence. Likewise, a house will run more smoothly if its members recognize the authority of its patriarch. If they refuse to accept his authority, then he will be unable to cover them.

Deuteronomy 12:32

...thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. In the face of repeated commands to the contrary, men insist on altering God's laws. They change his appointed times, his authorized hierarchy, and his laws for marriage. If a woman wishes to submit to her husband, she should be encouraged, not ridiculed. A man should not be accused of abuse if he exercises authority in his house. If a man wishes to marry two women, he should not be ostracized. Homosexuality should never be openly approved, let alone celebrated. Men and women should both be encouraged to marry and have children. It matters not whether we approve of God's laws. He need consult no one but himself. As our Creator, he knows what is best for us.

Deuteronomy 13:6-11

Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death... Our loyalty must always be to God above our wives and children. We may intercede on their behalf as Moses did for Israel at Sinai, but we are not allowed to conceal them or to protect them if they are judged and convicted. Notice, however, that the command does not mention parents or husbands. It would seem that a wife or a child has discretion on whether or not to reveal the proselytizing activities of husband, mother, or father.

Deuteronomy 14:29

...the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow... The Torah consistently portrays those without the spiritual covering of a father or husband as underprivileged and poverty stricken. In fact, it might not be the case at all that the stranger is poor or that the fatherless is without a significant inheritance or that the widow does not have accumulated wealth and numerous children. The intent of the command is obviously to provide for the poor, but also to ensure that some patriarch takes an active part in the lives of every person in the community.

Deuteronomy 15:12

...an Hebrew...be sold unto thee... The law of the release in the seventh year applies to all Hebrew men and to Hebrew women who were not purchased for the purpose of marriage. See Exodus 21:3-11 and Leviticus 25:39-55 for more detailed information.

Deuteronomy 15:13-15

...thou shalt not let him go away empty. Whether male or female, a servant must be set free with provisions and liberal gifts. It was a way for poor men to learn a trade and establish the basis of a household and for poor girls to amass a greater dowry. The purpose of servitude in God's economy is not to oppress or exploit, but to teach and bless.

Deuteronomy 15:16-17

I will not go away from thee... A servant in a house for six years has the option of staying permanently. His master may not refuse him. If the servant is a woman, then she would expect to become a concubine to one of the men of the house. This law would discourage a master from buying slaves indiscriminately and encourage him to be very good toward excellent servants. For such an arrangement to work, there must be an astonishing degree of trust between master and servant.

Shoftim: Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

Deuteronomy 17:17

Neither shall he multiply wives to himself... It is commonly asserted that this verse proscribes polygyny for kings at the very least and for commoners, too, by way of example. That cannot be God's intended meaning unless we are also to understand the previous verse to proscribe owning more than one horse: "He shall not multiply horses to himself." Instead, this law is against the use of marriage to seal treaties with pagans and against abuse of power. Solomon did both. He married the daughters of pagan kings and worshipped their false gods in temples he built for them. He used his wealth and position of authority to collect far more women than he could possibly love, as if they were merely pretty baubles to decorate his house.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20

That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren... The greater one's authority and power, the greater one's responsibility to keep God's laws. A father and husband must be more disciplined, more pious, and more pure than those in his care. He is an example for them to follow, a spiritual shield that must be stronger in order to be functional, and a judge who must be able to rule in good conscience.

Deuteronomy 19:15

At the mouth of two witnesses... Although many sexual sins demand the death penalty, there must be at least two witnesses to the crime in order to convict. There is no suggestion that we should spy on our neighbors in their bedrooms or presume guilt for every suspicious behavior. Those things which are done in secret are for God to punish, not man. It is for us only to punish those sins which are committed openly, flagrantly, or otherwise under circumstances in which we are able to witness them.

Deuteronomy 20:7

...that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Men should not die without heirs, nor leave childless widows. If a man is engaged to be married, he should consummate the marriage and spend some time with his bride before going off to war or embarking on any other hazardous venture. If a man is at war and his brother dies childless, he should immediately return home and marry the widow to produce an heir for the dead.

Deuteronomy 20:14

But the women, and the little ones... Verse 13 says that every male is to be killed, so that "little ones" here probably does not include boys. The women and

girls are not to be spared out of sympathy for their weakness, as some commentators assert, but because their death would serve no purpose. God does not command his people to kill indiscriminately. All males of the conquered city were to be killed so that there would be no heirs left to lay claim to the land or to assert authority over the survivors. The women and girls could inherit land if they had no brothers, but it would become a permanent part of their new husbands' tribal inheritance upon their deaths. By sparing and assimilating only females, Israel could exercise a measure of mercy and eliminate doubts as to their legal claim to the land.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

But thou shalt utterly destroy them... Certain peoples who inhabited the Promised Land were to be completely wiped out, not sparing even infants. This was either because their blood was tainted with that of the Rephaim or simply to prevent Israel from learning their religion.

Ki Tetzei: Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

Deuteronomy 21:10-23

This passage discusses three potential problems in a marriage. In fact, they might represent a single progression of events. First, a married man marries a beautiful war captive. He either favors her for her youth and beauty, or else he treats her poorly because of her lower status as a concubine. He then elevates the son of his favorite wife over the older son of his other wife, and his house suffers for it.

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

v10 – When thou goest forth to war... God told Israel to spare the women of most conquered cities because there was no good reason to destroy them. Simply sparing their lives, however, leaves them vulnerable to any number of terrible fates. In war, men have been known to be less than kind to captured women. God gave these laws to discourage their abuse at the hands of their conquerors. Prescribing a process for this tendency provides some measure of protection for the woman and a cooling off time for her captor.

v11 – ...that thou wouldst have her to thy wife. All of the captives of war would become slaves. They had no say in where they would go or whom they would serve. It is well within a man's authority to take one of his servant girls as a wife—as a *concubine* to be precise. This would be an immediate upgrade in her status and rights as a slave.

v12 – ...she shall shave her head, and pare her nails. This is for both physical and spiritual hygiene. Hair is symbolic of authority. Shaving her head ritualistically removed the covering of her dead father or husband.

v13 – ...a full month. This waiting period accomplishes three things:

1. It gives the man some time to reconsider his intent to marry this pagan woman, for the excitement and foolishness of battle to wear away.
2. It also gives the woman some time to mourn the dead and adjust to her new situation. If he still believes her to be a good addition to his house, then he may have her.
3. Most disease will become apparent after shaving her head, cleaning her up, and waiting a month.

v14 – ...if thou have no delight in her... After the required waiting period, if her captor changes his mind, he must let her go free. If he had purchased her, he would be required to let her be redeemed by her family. Since this woman has no family, and she was not purchased, she simply walks away with the legal status of a widow. She may negotiate a marriage to another man or remain single as she desires. This only applies if he had intended her to be a wife for himself or his son. If he had taken her to be a simple servant, then he would be free to keep or sell her.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17

If a man have two wives... The text does not say the man is an adulterer or that he must put one of his wives away. In fact, scripture nowhere offers any condemnation of polygyny.

Favoritism breeds jealousy and bitterness, which become the seeds of even greater destruction. To a certain extent, favoritism is inevitable. Parents have favorite children, children have favorite parents, and a polygynous man is almost certain to have a favorite wife. It is not a problem unless it is flaunted or becomes the basis of sin. The firstborn son of a free wife must be considered the firstborn of his father, regardless of how the man feels about his wife. We are prone to poor decisions based on emotion rather than reason and spiritual insight. Torah moderates our weaknesses. If we follow God's laws no matter how we might feel, we cannot go wrong.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

v18 – If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son... This passage is not about a merely disobedient or disrespectful child, but one who has forsaken all that his parents have taught him for a life of unrepentant rebelliousness and profligacy.

...or the voice of his mother... Children must obey their mothers as much as their fathers. Throughout one's life, a mother deserves honor and deference.

v19 – Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him... Both parents must agree that their child is beyond redemption. This means that his rebellion was unlikely to be caused by any division in his parent's marriage. It also means that he must be a very poorly behaved child indeed.

v20 – And they shall say unto the elders of his city... Not only must the parents agree, but they must convince the local court. Parents have a great deal of authority over their children. They may control education, diet, medical care, activities, and discipline, but they may not execute them for any crime. No person may be executed without a trial and at least two witnesses.

Deuteronomy 22:1-4

...thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again. Although this law specifically addresses livestock, such laws are also about people. In fact, verse 3 specifies "all lost things of thy brother's." If someone's child or wife (or anyone else under his authority) have significantly strayed without his knowledge, then we have a responsibility to inform him and do what we can to help. We are not to force ourselves into his business, but we must at least offer what help he will welcome.

Deuteronomy 22:5

...that which pertaineth unto a man... Accoutrements of a warrior (According to *Strong's*, *Brown-Driver-Briggs*, and Adam Clarke, *geber* is more accurately translated as "warrior," emphasizing martial strength, rather than simply as "man" as it is translated in the KJV, and which would normally be the Hebrew *ḡyṣh*.) include

armor, weapons, accessories of heavy labor, and perhaps clothing which bares the thighs and legs, but what, exactly, constitutes women's clothing? I doubt that any particular style is intended, but perhaps certain characteristics. I do not know if there is such a thing as universally 'masculine' or 'feminine' fashion, but I have some opinions based on my understanding of this verse and my personal prejudices. In the Bible, warrior, hunter, and hard laborer are roles normally limited to men, although there are some exceptions. Clothing specifically designed for those purposes should therefore be worn by men and not women. While the Bible, including statements straight from God (See for example, Song of Songs 1:10-11, Jeremiah 2:32, and Ezekiel 16:10-14.), often describes women as appropriately ornamented with jewels and elaborate clothing, makeup, and hair, those things are almost never associated with men. On the other hand, anointing oils, scents, and fine (well-made of high-quality materials) clothing are associated with both men and women. In many ways, the roles of men and women overlap. Both are teachers, farmers, traders, artisans, singers, prophets, and parents, so we should expect their clothing to overlap significantly as well.

I do not believe it was intended to prevent a woman from assisting her husband or doing occasional heavy work or even from picking up a sword or bow to defend her family and country. It was intended to prevent them from doing such things routinely. In fact, when men go off to war (as women should not) the labor of the homestead does not patiently wait for them to return. Their wives and children must stay behind and take over all the work that their husbands would normally do. But this is a temporary circumstance. When the men return, they resume their normal activities as their wives resume theirs. If some men do not return, it is the duty of their family and neighbors to ensure that their widows and young children receive the protection and care they need.

There is much cultural subjectivity in the gender of clothing, as well. Is a kilt considered the peculiar dress (no pun intended) of a Scottish warrior? Then I would say that women should not wear them in Scotland. The intent is that women should not deliberately dress or act like men, and men should not deliberately dress or act like women, whatever that means in any given time and place. This law encourages the division of labor and discourages improper attitudes and behaviors such as transvestitism and homosexuality.

By improper attitudes, I mean the tendency of some to hide their gender through fashion. There are obvious forms of transvestitism: men who dress as women, for example. However, there are subtler forms of which the practitioners might not even be aware. I mean the wearing of excessive or excessively delicate jewelry by men, women who habitually dress in mannish clothing because they dislike being perceived as feminine. I am not suggesting that women must wear ribbons and flowers, but they should not try to look like men. Some women, ashamed of their sex, whether consciously or not, hide behind untucked flannel shirts and oversized khaki pants. They should dress as women and be proud of their sex. There is no shame in a woman's femininity, but there is certainly shame in hiding it.

Transvestitism is a hallmark of a degenerate, feminized society. Men behave as women and even claim to be women in a vain attempt to paint over their perverse minds. They say their bodies are male, but their hearts are female; they cannot help it; they were born that way. God says their bodies are male, their minds are polluted, and their hearts are scarred and hardened. Men should behave as men no matter how they might feel about it. They should neither dress nor behave as women. They must abandon their self-indulgence for self-control. Happiness will never be found in giving in to every perverse desire, but in conforming body, mind, and spirit to the will of God.

Deuteronomy 22:6-7

...thou shalt not take the dam with the young. There are two lessons I would draw from this law. First, it is better to leave a mother childless than to leave a child motherless. Second, a man's wife should be more important to him than her children.

There are times when the well-being of one person is incompatible with that of another. If a man must make a choice between what is best for his child and what is best for his wife, he should favor his wife. He will live longer, and be happier with her continually by his side. On the other hand, if his wife is a source of danger or is intent on destructive behaviors such as adultery, she has made his choice for him already.

Deuteronomy 22:8

...a battlement for thy roof... Everyone is responsible for his own actions; however, as a homeowner must reduce hazards to visitors in his house, a patriarch must reduce hazards to his family. He cannot protect those who reject his authority, but he is responsible for the spiritual and physical security of those who do not.

Deuteronomy 22:9-11

Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds... There might be some very practical reasons for the rules against adulteration laid out here and in Leviticus 19:19, but I do not believe those considerations are entirely relevant to God's purpose. Certainly he wants to be obeyed literally; however there are higher, weightier applications regarding the mixing of things that do not belong together, though they might appear superficially similar.

- Most relevantly to this work, do not marry unbelievers.
- Do not mix pagan worship with the religion of the True God.
- Do not employ bait-and-switch tactics by presenting one thing as if it were another.
- In *Harmony of the Law, Volume 2, Another Supplement*, John Calvin wrote that these laws were encouragement to keep life simple and pure. "It is probable, therefore, that the end which, as I have said, was

proposed by God was, that, by cultivating natural and simple habits all their life through, they should keep themselves pure and uncorrupted from every strange vice. On this account Scripture compares strange doctrines to leaven, since by their additions or curtailings they corrupt the pure word of God.”¹⁵¹

All of those explanations are likely correct. I take exception, however, to one popular interpretation against inter-racial marriage. While God phrased this law in terms of physical traits, its true application, as it applies to human marriage, is spiritual. Throughout the Bible, God commanded Israel not to intermarry with this or that people, but, except for allusions to the Nephilim, he never proffered genetics as justification. Instead, he said not to marry them because of what they do. A person’s ancestry cannot make him wicked or unfit for marriage, but his behavior and his attitudes certainly can.

Deuteronomy 22:12

...wherewith thou coverest thyself. The order of laws in the Torah frequently seems random, but it never is. The preceding laws about mixed crops, fibers, and unequal yokes concern marriage. The following verses concern marriage. So does this law about fixing tassels on the four corners of a garment. A covering of fabric is metaphorically a covering of authority, which shields the covered from wrath and hides his sin. Yeshua covers us with his authority and his blood. (There are four tassels; four is the number of the Messiah.) A husband covers his wife and family with authority delegated by God and sanctified by the Messiah.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21

Sex outside of marriage is a serious offense in God’s Law and in any agrarian society. There are two non-sex-specific reasons premarital virginity is important:

1. Neither party need worry that memories or contagion of past lovers might poison the marriage.
2. Virginity is a symptom of a chaste and godly nature.

Notice that this law is concerned with the virginity of a woman. Ideally a man should also be a virgin when he marries, but there are three reasons it is even more important for a woman:

1. Her husband can be sure that her children are his. If she is a virgin, then she cannot be pregnant.
2. Physical, spiritual, and mnemonic pathologies are more readily contracted through sexual activity by women than by men. That might not seem fair, but fairness is irrelevant to the argument.
3. There is a spiritual component to the shedding of blood. Every covenant is sealed with blood, whether it be of animals, of a third party, or of the

¹⁵¹ John Calvin, *Commentaries, Calvin Translation Society Edition*. Trans. John King, M.D. (Christian Classics Ethereal Library CD-ROM, Wheaton College, 2000.)

covenant makers. A Hebrew man enters the covenant of his people through the blood of circumcision. A woman enters the covenant of her husband's people through the blood of her virginity.

When a virgin woman married, she placed a cloth on the marriage bed. The bloodied cloth was marked so as to be positively identifiable later and then given to her father as proof of her virginity. If the marriage should sour and the husband seek to defame his wife by accusing her of premarital fornication, this cloth would be produced in her defense. Some women do not bleed at all, and I do not know what would have been done in those cases. In today's Middle East, women are often examined by a third party prior to the wedding night to verify their virginity. The same thing might have been done then, but if not, I do not know what recourse would have been available to such a woman.

v13 – ...and go in unto her... They have already consummated the marriage and have begun to live as husband and wife. See verse 15.

...and hate her. A man must truly hate his wife to invoke this law. If he is truthful, then everyone of importance already knows it. The woman knew it before the marriage took place, he discovered it on their wedding night, and the father learned of it when he was not given evidence of her virginity afterwards. For whatever reason, the man overlooked her sin for a time, but never forgave her. Unforgiveness led to bitterness, which led to hatred, which has now become murder.

v14 – And give occasions of speech against her. Not only has he accused her of a capital offense, but has spent some time in gossip. We are not told whether his gossip is true or not, but it is certainly hateful.

v15-17 – ...take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity... This is the bloodied cloth from their wedding night. If the husband's accusations are true, then there will be no proof.

v19 – And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver... This was a heavy fine. It was given to the woman's father because he was accused of keeping an immoral house and because it might then be used for the woman's benefit but outside her husband's reach.

He may not put her away all his days. Although his house might be a very uncomfortable place for her to live, she would at least have the security of knowing she could not be divorced. However, if he were to physically abuse her, she could still leave him. She would not be able to recover her dowry, but she would have the hundred pieces of silver.

v20-21 – ...to play the whore in her father's house. This penalty demonstrates the very seriousness with which God views chastity. It is vitally important that a man marry well, maintain discipline over his children, and teach his house moral behavior. Their physical and spiritual lives depend on his governance.

Deuteronomy 22:22

...a woman married to an husband... The penalty for adultery is death for both participants, but adultery is not what most people believe it to be. This law

defines the crime as any man, married or not, lying with another man's wife. Every example of adultery in scripture carries on the same theme.

Deuteronomy 22:23-24

...betrothed unto an husband... Betrothal constitutes a vow. Once that vow is made, the marriage ceremony and consummation are merely a formality. The betrothed woman belongs as much to her fiancé as she will eventually belong to her husband. If such a woman has sex with another man, the penalty is the same as for adultery after her marriage. Both she and her lover are to be executed.

...because she cried not... Since a woman's reproductive capacity does not belong to herself, but to her husband, she has every responsibility to resist a rape. She must call for help or otherwise fight back. Failure to resist is surrender and tantamount to collusion with her husband's enemy. It might seem cold to delicate modern sensibilities, but God's law is not concerned with our sensibilities so much as with the immutability of right and wrong. "So thou shalt put away evil from among you."

Deuteronomy 22:25-27

But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field... The rape of a betrothed or married woman is adultery, but only the man is guilty. Since the crime occurred where no one could have heard her cry out, she is presumed to be innocent.

Deuteronomy 22:28-29

If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed... This woman's reproductive capacity has not been promised to or claimed by anyone. There is no distinction in this law between rape and seduction. In either case, the man has committed a serious crime, but he has not violated an existing marriage. The penalty is merely a fine instead of death. Exodus 22:17 reveals that her father controls the ultimate outcome. The marriage is not initiated by the sex act, but by the transfer of authority from father to husband. He may either force the marriage or forbid it; the man and woman involved have no real say. Since the woman is still under her father's authority, the fine is paid to him with the expectation that it would be either a bride price if he allows the two to marry or a dowry to attract another husband if he does not. If he gives his daughter to the man, then the man can never divorce her, and she will be a free wife whether or not she brings a dowry.

Deuteronomy 22:30

...nor discover his father's skirt. I believe this to be an unfortunate translation. It is not inaccurate, but it is difficult to understand. *Galah* (discover) would be better understood if translated as "remove" or "take away."¹⁵² "Skirt" is an accurate rendering of *kanaf* in sixteenth century English, but is misleading today. A better

¹⁵² *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definitions*. (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

word might be “corners,”¹⁵³ and it refers to the *tzitziyot* on the four corners of his *tallit*. The *tzitziyot* are symbolic of God’s law and our obedience, and the *tallit* is symbolic of the authority carried by its owner. To remove the *tzitziyot* from a man’s *tallit* is to divorce his authority from God’s law.

The act of taking a father’s wife is already adultery and punishable by death, but this law is not about a man having sexual relations with a married woman. Rather it is about relations with a man’s father’s widow, specifically his step-mother. As demonstrated centuries later by the tragic events of David’s house, a man taking his father’s widow is an unambiguous attempt to seize power. It is an unlawful attack against his father’s authority.

(See also 1 Kings 2.)

Deuteronomy 23:1

He that is wounded in the stones... This law was not intended to bar a eunuch or injured man from worship or participation in society, but only from serving as an elder or judge. God does not look down on those who have been involuntarily rendered impotent (See Isaiah 56:3-5.), but the leaders of God’s people are to be fathers.

Deuteronomy 23:2

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation... Spiritual, genetic, and cultural inheritances are all important in God’s plan. No one of unknown paternity could hold a position of leadership in the community. After the tenth generation, any such taint would be diluted a thousand times. As with the eunuch, the bastard may otherwise fully participate in the worship and society of Israel.

This law is also an implicit approval of polygyny as God did not consider the many children of Bilhah and Zilpah to be bastards. They were all included in the “congregation” of Israel, assuming leadership positions alongside their brothers, as did their descendants.

Deuteronomy 23:3-6

An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation... Because of the general character of their people, the sons of Ammon and Moab could not be leaders in Israel even if they were fully converted. This law does not apply to women, since they would share the nationality of their husbands. Their sons would be fully Israelites.

Deuteronomy 23:10-11

...uncleanness that chanceth him by night... There is no sin in uncleanness nor in the unavoidable nocturnal emissions to which every man is occasionally

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

subjected by nature. However, for spiritual sanitation, such a man must remain outside of all military camps until he has washed and the sun has set.

Deuteronomy 23:15-16

...the servant which is escaped... This law encompasses a concubine who has fled an abusive or neglectful husband. A bond servant's obligations toward his master are nullified if he is mistreated, and a wife who is mistreated should not be sent back to her husband. Her moral and legal bond to him is broken. A woman who has left her husband because of his abuse should not be looked down upon, but welcomed.

Deuteronomy 23:17-18

There shall be no whore... Sexual acts have no place in the worship of God. The marriage of man and woman is only an allegory of our relationship with God and is not the relationship itself. The marriage of man and man is an allegory of atheism and is doubly abhorrent. Even the money gained from religious prostitution is forbidden as tithes or offerings to God.

Deuteronomy 24:1-2

...because he hath found some uncleanness in her... "Some uncleanness" does not refer to just anything the man dislikes. It is not the same Hebrew word normally translated "unclean," but implies something sexual or indecent, yet still short of adultery. Nor is this simply an allowance made by Moses, a compromise with the prevailing Egyptian culture as so many commentators insist. God's laws do not compromise. God did not tolerate idolatry or incest, both of which were common in Egypt at that time, so why should he tolerate divorce simply because the Israelites had adopted yet another bad habit from their former masters? The truth is that divorce is allowed by God because it is sometimes necessary in a fallen world. This freedom should not be abused by a childish man who cannot govern his house well, but it must be allowed for those who have a serious pathology in their house that cannot be dealt with otherwise.

...let him write her a bill of divorcement... A certificate of divorce is necessary to prove that she is eligible to remarry. Her husband would likely be required to return her dowry as well. Without this bill, any man who marries her would be committing adultery with her. If she had been put away for adultery, however, her husband would not be required to give her a certificate or return her dowry.

Deuteronomy 24:3-4

[He] may not take her again to be his wife... If the woman's second husband divorces her or dies, she may not return to her first husband. This is an implicit prohibition of polyandry in which one woman is shared by multiple men.

Thou shalt not cause the land to sin... Not the people but the land. Like unavenged murder, polyandry and wife swapping pollutes the land itself.

Deuteronomy 24:5

When a man hath taken a new wife... He is not to be lazy or neglect his work, but he should not enter into any major ventures that will occupy more of his time than necessary. He should spend that time with his new wife, helping her adjust to his house and learning to love and serve her. This could become a very difficult prospect if she is his third or fourth wife.

The woman is not given the same instructions because the major part of her responsibilities consists of serving her husband. She should never go off to war, and whatever business ventures she may launch will be primarily for the benefit of her family.

Deuteronomy 24:16

Every man shall be put to death for his own sin. In the story of Adam and Eve, Adam was punished for disobeying God, Eve for listening to the Serpent and disobeying her husband, and the Serpent for lying and tempting Eve. None was punished for the sins of the others, although all were impacted. Though he has authority over her, a husband should also never be punished for the sins of his wife nor a wife for her husband's.

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

...for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow... Since the landless have no place to grow food, and since the fatherless and widows have no patriarchy, it falls upon the men of the community to ensure they are cared for. Young widows should find husbands, but the elderly we should treat as our own mothers.

Deuteronomy 25:4

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox... It is not a sin to take sustenance, comfort, and even profit from your labors. Whether father and husband, mother and wife, or child, each person should gain materially from his role and responsibilities in the house.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

If a married man dies without giving his wife a child, his brother or other near male kinsman is to marry his wife and produce an heir for the deceased. The levirate was more than a mere custom, but a command of God practiced since immediately after Adam's expulsion from the Garden. Land is passed down from father to son. If a man dies without sons, then his daughters may inherit the land provided that they marry within their own tribe. If he dies without any children, then his widow must marry his near kin to ensure that his land will remain in the tribe.

v5 – If brethren dwell together... A cousin living next door is preferable to a sibling living a hundred miles away. If the brother already has business elsewhere, he will be unable to effectively manage both properties. It is better that someone nearby marries her and manages the land. The heir they produce will grow up knowing his inheritance.

...and take her to him to wife... This is a duty. If a male relative lives near the land of the deceased, he must marry the widow and produce an heir. If either or both of them are fat and ugly, it must still be done. If he is already married, he will now have two wives. The law makes no exceptions for prior relationships or preferences.

v6 – ...the firstborn which she beareth... When speaking of people, the term “firstborn” always refers to the first male offspring of a man. If the woman bears only daughters, then Zelophehad’s law makes her daughters to inherit from the deceased.

v7-8 – And if the man like not to take his brother’s wife... The woman has every right to take her case up with the town elders if her husband’s brother refuses her.

v9-10 – ...and loose his shoe from off his foot... According to Keil and Delitzsch, removing a man’s shoe was akin to dispossessing him, stemming from the idea that a man walks the land which he owns.¹⁵⁴ Consider God’s promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit all the land on which he stepped. I believe it is indeed a reference to inheritance and dispossession, but couched in a sexual euphemism. In other places in Scripture, “between the feet” refers to procreation or otherwise to sexuality. It is very possible that removing one shoe was describing the lopsided state of the family: one brother had offspring, while denying the same to another. Hence one foot shod and the other bare. There is no punishment prescribed beyond public humiliation and denial of the property in question.

Deuteronomy 25:11-12

...and taketh him by the secrets... A law against a man denying the right of procreation to a woman is followed by a law against a woman doing the same to a man. Since the intent of the woman is to end a man’s power on earth, her power is removed in the offending hand. The end result is as if she had falsely accused the man and received in herself the punishment she intended for him. This is not a life and death struggle between the two men. If it were, then ending one man’s line would not be an issue.

Deuteronomy 25:14

Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures... It is neither advisable nor even possible to treat all people exactly the same, however it is important to be equitable. One child should not be given all privileges, while another is treated as a servant. The same applies to wives. Jacob and Elkanah both kept unbalanced houses

¹⁵⁴ Johann Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (e-Sword v7.0.5, copyright 2000-2003, Rick Meyers.)

by the favoritism they showed to one woman over another. In both instances, the favored wife was infertile until God intervened.

Ki Tavo: Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8

Deuteronomy 26:11-15

...that they may eat within thy gates... People were created to live in close communities. In God's economy, children are our primary retirement investments, and neighbors are our golden parachutes.

Deuteronomy 26:17-19

This is another summary of the wedding vows between God and Israel.

v17 – Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God... Israel, as God's bride, promised him obedience and respect. The same are a wife's obligation to her husband.

v18-19 – And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people... God, as Israel's husband, promised to hold them to his laws, love them, praise them, enhance their reputation and beauty, and to jealously guard them from other gods. Such are among a husband's obligations to his wife. Note that it is not Israel's responsibility to guard her God from other nations, nor is it a wife's responsibility to keep her husband from other women.

Deuteronomy 27:16

Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. Parents are not to be treated lightly, but as bearers of God's authority on earth. Even when we are grown and have established our own houses, we must still treat our parents with dignity and honor. We will be blessed by God and eventually by our own children as well.

Deuteronomy 27:20-23

Cursed be he that lieth... We are not to peer through bedroom windows or otherwise pry into the private lives of others. Those sins done in the open must be dealt with openly according to God's laws. However, those sins done in private without the view of witnesses are to be dealt with by God. Their perpetrators are cursed by their actions and by our affirmation that such things will not be tolerated among us.

Deuteronomy 28:4

Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body... God unequivocally promises fertility and the prosperity of our children if we obey his laws. Although there might be individual cases through which God chooses to work differently, this rule will stand in all ages and nations.

Deuteronomy 28:9

...if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD... Although God will always be the God of Israel, the fullest measure of his blessings are contingent upon their obedience to him. The same is true in a man's house. No man can protect or cover a wife who refuses to live under his authority.

Deuteronomy 28:11, 18

...the fruit of thy body... A man cannot securely be with his wife if he must wonder who else has been with her. He cannot know that her children are his, nor can he be sure of his own safety. If he can stomach lying with her at all, then the children she bares could suffer from his future doubts regarding their actual parentage. A wife's obedience to her husband is vital if she desires the full blessings of marriage and children.

Deuteronomy 28:15

...if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD... Disobedience to God invites terrible consequences. As God cannot protect a people who refuses to submit to his authority, so a man cannot adequately cover a wife or family who refuses to submit to his. His intercessions on their behalf could be made ineffectual, his earthly blessings be destroyed, squandered, or deflected, and his physical protection ineffectual.

Deuteronomy 28:47

...with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart... God loves for his people to serve him willingly and joyfully. He takes no pleasure in hurting them or in forcing them into obedience. A good husband does the same. He does not force his wife to submit to him, but loves her, making her obedience to him easier. Cheerfulness is among the most attractive qualities a woman can possess. A charming smile and a pleasant demeanor will hold her husband's attention long after her beauty has faded. He does himself good by helping her to be happy, and she does herself good by showing him happiness even when she does not feel it as thoroughly as she might like.

Deuteronomy 28:53-57

...his eye shall be evil... Prolonged adversity has a way of souring relationships. Husbands, wives, and even children must guard against allowing their external struggles to be turned internally against their own families. Negativity and joy are both contagious. This is especially true for parents. The disposition of a leader can be transmitted throughout his followers much more readily than the opposite.

Nitzavim: Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

Deuteronomy 29:10-13

Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger... Women, children, and Torah-keeping gentiles entered into the covenant of Israel alongside the men. As far as salvation and citizenship in the Kingdom of God is concerned, there is no male or female, Jew or gentile. This has no bearing whatsoever on God's intended hierarchy within the family, the church, or society at large.

Deuteronomy 29:18-21

...man, or woman, or family, or tribe... God deals with us in many ways and through many entities. He deals with us as individuals, whether man or woman, as families, as tribes, and as nations. Patriarchs and other leaders play a pivotal role in the relationship between the group and God through influence and spiritual covering, but in the end, every person will be held accountable for his own sins.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10

...the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity... A willingness to forgive and restore broken relationships is essential to a long-lasting and healthy marriage. Husbands must be willing to forgive a repentant wife. Since men are also far from perfect, wives must be willing to forgive a repentant husband. A willingness to repent is even more important. Without it there can be no real forgiveness.

Vayelech: Deuteronomy 31

Deuteronomy 31:12

...men, and women, and children... Although fathers are to set *halakha* for their houses, women should learn God's law for themselves. They will be better wives counselors to their husbands, better mothers and teachers to their children, and better women to stand against deception and wrong teaching.

Deuteronomy 31:17-18

...I will hide my face from them... If a woman flouts her husband's authority, he cannot effectively cover her. Eventually he might have to withdraw his protection from her altogether.

Ha'azinu: Deuteronomy 32

Deuteronomy 32:46-47

...ye shall command your children... “Honor your father and your mother” is the only one of the Ten Commandments to be accompanied by a promise: “that your days may be long in the land.” Here that promise is repeated, but it accompanies the reverse command, “Command your children to obey all the words of this Law.” If the parents of a nation teach their children obedience to God’s Law, and if children honor their parents, then that nation cannot fall.

V'zot HaBracha: Deuteronomy 33-34

Deuteronomy 33:9

...for they have observed thy word... The tribe of Levi was chosen to carry the priesthood in part because they loved God more than their own families. This blessing is echoed in the words of Yeshua who said, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” God’s will and Law must always come before earthly considerations. If he commands a man to leave his family behind to preach the gospel in a foreign land, then that man must go. If he commands a man to tear his own family apart for the sake of the Kingdom, then so be it.

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