

Doctrine of Marriage

Marriages in Biblical and Jewish Culture

1. A study of the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures brings forth the following points about marriage. Jewish culture and Divine provisions are interwoven. .
2. The *Bible* begins with the general understanding that individuals will marry and that the institution of marriage will then be guided by specific Divine mandates and supported by general principles.
3. The divine mandate is found in Genesis 2:18, 24. *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him...24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*
4. Some general principles to support the Divine institution of marriage include the following.
 - Marriage is the uniting of two individuals into one. *Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man will leave his father and mother....*
 - Marriage provides a forum for total intimacy through a physical consummation of the act of marriage sanctified by Divine approval. *Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man will leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*
 - Marriage is designed to be temporary. Contrary to what some religions teach, the historic Christian faith declares that marriage is for this lifetime only. Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for even postulating a hypothetical situation of marriage beyond the grave. (Matthew 22:24ff; Mark 12:19ff; Luke 20:28ff). While the concept of a marital relationship in heaven appeals to a sense of romance for some, there is no Biblical basis for such a belief. .
 - Marriage is a human contract to be honored. Unfortunately, like any other human contract, the marriage vows can be broken, though to do so is a transgression of the law and honor. When the marriage contract is broken in a variety of ways, including abuse and infidelity, God, in grace has provided a means to find deliverance and freedom from those sinful attitudes and actions proceeding from hardened hearts (Deuteronomy 24:1; Exodus 21:10,11).
5. Question. “Is there sin when the divine provision is appropriated for finding deliverance and freedom from a violation of the marriage contract? “ A careful answer would say, “No, in such a situation there is no sin involved.” However, great care must be taken in this matter for sin is at the root of every divorce or separation.

6. But a divorce can take place whereby there is an innocent party and apart from sin for, as we note this carefully, even God is recorded as being divorced. Severing His covenantal relationship with Israel God pronounced His divorce in Hosea 2:2 when He said, *“for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband.”* The prophet Jeremiah declared that actually God wrote out a certificate of divorce for Israel. *Jeremiah 3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*
7. Once a marriage relationship was entered into on the basis of a contractual agreement, a very large family was encouraged.
 - *Psalms 127:3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*
 - *Psalms 127:5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*
 - *Psalms 128:3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.*
8. Because marriage is a Divine idea and the institution of marriage is according to divine design, the physical intimacy associated with marriage did not diminish sensual joy as per the Song of Solomon, or make anyone permanently ceremonially unclean.
 - *Leviticus 15:18 The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.*
9. On special occasions there was a ritual cleansing when coming into the presence of God which did require temporarily abstaining from acts of intimacy.
 - *Exodus 19:15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.*
10. During days of national conflict and war there was generally no sexual contact, for soldiers tend to fight better when their energies are focused on the mission at hand. In the case of Uriah he believed he should lead by example.
 - *2 Samuel 11:11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.*
11. A common word for families in the Old Testament and New Testament economy was “house” or “household.”

- *Genesis 14:14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.*
 - *1 Corinthians 16:15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)*
 - *Philippians 4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.*
8. In the Jewish culture the family would incorporate not only those who had entered into a covenant contract with formal marriage vows but other individuals as well, to include multiple wives, concubines, slaves, servants, brothers, sisters, in laws, visitors, widows, and orphans.
 - *Genesis 17:23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him...27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.*
 - *Genesis 46:5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: 7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.*
 - *Matthew 10:35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*
 12. There was a great sense of unity in the family that reached both backwards and forward (Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Deuteronomy 5:9; 23:2; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:2; John 9:2).
 13. To offend one family member was to offend all (Numbers 35:19; Deuteronomy 19:4-10; 2 Samuel 3:27).
 14. The father was the head of the family with the power of life and death over others (Exodus 21:7, 15-17; Deuteronomy 13:6-10; Judges 11:30-40).
 15. The good parent was the one who could manage the household well (1 Tim. 3:4) manifested by protecting it (Deuteronomy 1:31), showing love (Hosea 11:1-3) and instructing the children (Psalm 78:4; Proverbs 1:8; Joel 1:2,3) without making them angry (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:22).

16. The good father disciplined the children.

- *Proverbs 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*
- *Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*

17. The influence of the mother was important. She was to teach (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20) and provide a role model to follow (Proverbs 31:1-28).

- *Proverbs 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*
- *Proverbs 6:20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*

18. Children were expected to honor their parents (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1) by obedience (Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-4; 5:20; 15:5; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20) and living in such a manner that their parents would be proud. (Proverbs 10:1; 15:20).

19. Children were valued, though sons were preferred to daughters.

- *Psalms 127:5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*
- *Psalms 128:3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.*
- *Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

20. If a woman could not bear children, she could cover her barrenness by having a surrogate mother bear the children. Rachel demanded from Jacob that she have a son through her slave, Bilhah.

- *Genesis 30:1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. 2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? 3 And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees that I may also have children by her.*

21. Women squatted to give birth to children. Bilhah would have squatted across the knees of Rachel so that in a symbolic way Rachel could say, “*God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan*” (Genesis 30:6).

22. Either the mother or the father would name the child.

- *Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.*
- *Genesis 4:26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.*

23. The son's family was expected to care for his parents.

- *Psalms 127:3 Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. 4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

24. When the daughters married they became members of the husband's household. Special laws were provided for daughters who were sold into slavery.

- *Exodus 21:7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do.*

25. Through debt, a person, or an entire family, could be placed into bondage.

- *Leviticus 25:39 And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: 40 But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee:*

26. Children had few rights. A son who cursed or struck his parent could be killed.

- *Exodus 21:15 And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. 16 And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. 17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.*
- *Leviticus 20:9 For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him.*
- *Deuteronomy 27:16 Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
- *Proverbs 30:11 There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.*

27. When Israel went into a state of apostasy they would offer their children in sacrifice to God, or to "Molech".

- *Judges 11:30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, 31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. 32 So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands. 33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. 34 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. 36 And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. 37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. 38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. 39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, 40 That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.*
- *1 Kings 16:34 In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.*
- *2 Kings 23:10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.*
- *Jeremiah 32:35 And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

28. The offering of children in sacrifice was prohibited.

- *Exodus 34:20 But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.*
- *Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,*

29. The first born son was to be dedicated to the Lord by offering a substitutionary sacrifice of redemption.
- *Exodus 22:29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.*
 - *Exodus 13:13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.*
30. Marriages occurred when a man “took” a wife (Genesis 19:14; 2 Chronicles 13:21) or when a father “gave” his daughters in marriage (Genesis 29:19, 28; Exodus 2:21).
31. The betrothal of a woman to a man was considered a marriage (Deuteronomy 28:30; 2 Samuel 3:14) though no sexual activity had taken place (Matthew 1:24, 25).
32. Monogamy was the divinely ordained practice (Genesis 25:20; 41:50) but bigamy was allowed. Lamech, a descendent of Cain, had two wives, Adah and Zillah (Genesis 4:19). Elkanah married Hannah and Penninah (1 Samuel 1:2; study Deuteronomy 21:15).
33. In addition to monogamy and bigamy, polygamy was also prevalent. Jacob married both Leah and her sister Rachel while siring children through the slaves Zilpah and Bilhah. (Genesis 30:1-24). Esau had many wives (Genesis 36:1-5) as did Gideon (Judg. 8:30) and King David. (1 Samuel 18:27; 25:42; 2 Samuel 11) Solomon had a harem of seven hundred wives (1 Kings 11:1-3).
34. With the coming of Christ and the Christian era, polygamy rapidly declined in Jewish culture. It was finally prohibited in the eleventh century AD.
35. The Law of Moses prohibited marriage with foreign women (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Exodus 34:16; Judg. 3:6) though it was not honored. Esau married three women from Canaan (Genesis 36:2); Joseph married a woman from Egypt (Genesis 41:45); Moses married a Midianite; Gideon married a Canaanite woman (Judg. 8:31); Boaz married Ruth who became an ancestor of David (Ruth 1:4; 4:13-17).
36. Many foreign women were married having been captured in war (Deuteronomy 21:9-13; Judg. 5:29).
37. During the days of Ezra and Nehemiah the rampant marriage between Jewish and foreign wives was reversed and divorces were demanded (Neh. 10:30; Ezra 10:3ff).
38. During the days of the New Testament, Paul forbade the marriage of Christians with non-Christians (2 Corinthians 14-16).
39. However, if a Christian did marry a non-Christian, the marriage was to continue because there was the possibility that a conversion could take place (1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 1 Peter 3:1-2).

40. The Law of Moses prohibited incest (Deuteronomy 22:30; 27:20, 22-23; Leviticus 18:6-20; 20:11-23).
41. Children of incest were prohibited from being part of the religious gatherings.
- *Deuteronomy 23:2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.*
42. However, when incest occurred, a marriage could take place as the lesser of two evils.
- Tamar and Amnon. *2 Samuel 13:13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.*
 - Sarah and Abraham. Sarah was the half-sister of Abraham. They shared the same father but not the same mother. *Genesis 20:12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife (Study Genesis 12:10-20).*
 - Rebecca and Isaac. Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, was his cousin. *Genesis 24:15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.*
 - Daughters of Lot with their Father. Lot engaged in sexual activity with his daughters to produce the Moabites and the Ammonites. *Genesis 19:30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. 31 And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37 And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. 38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.*
43. Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians, incestuous relationships were common in the Holy City (Ezekiel 22:10-11). Ezekiel believed that incest provoked the Lord to destroy Jerusalem.

- *Ezekiel 22:10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.*

44. The apostle Paul condemned an incestuous relationship in the Church of Corinth.

- *1 Corinthians 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.*

45. Despite the laws of incest, there was something known as “levirate” from the Latin *levir*, meaning “brother-in-law.” The Law of Moses stipulated that if a man died without leaving a male heir to carry on the family name, the man’s brother was to take the widow as a wife and to name the first son born of this marriage after the dead man.

- *Deuteronomy 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.*

46. In a levirate relationship, the widow was prohibited from marrying outside of the dead husband’s family. She was considered property.

- *Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

47. If a brother refused to perform the matrimonial services for his dead brother he was to suffer public humiliation. The widow was to remove his sandal and spit in his face for failing to honor the family duties (Deuteronomy 25:7-10).

- *Deuteronomy 25:7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; 9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. 10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.*

48. There are only two examples of the levirate law being pursued in Scripture. There is the story of Tamar (Genesis 28) and the experience of Ruth.

49. The apostle Paul never commented on the Law of the Levirate. He advocated marriage for those who could not control their passions and told widows they were better off if they did not marry. If widows did remarry, they should only marry other Christians.
- Better to marry than to burn. *1 Corinthians 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.*
 - Celibacy recommended. *1 Corinthians 7:40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.*
 - Only marry in the Lord. *1 Corinthians 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.*
- 8 Couples married at a young age, sometimes as early as fourteen as did Amon and Josiah, or sixteen, Johoiachin.
- 9 Marriages were usually arranged by fathers on behalf of the children with input from the mother.
- *Genesis 24:55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.*
- 10 The father initiated the search for a bride, usually among kin (Genesis 34:8) but he “gave” (i.e. sold) his daughter in marriage (Genesis 29:23, 28; Exodus 2:21) for a large dowry was expected. (Judges 14:5).
- 11 Daughters could be given in marriage as a prize in war, or captured.
- *Joshua 15:16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.*
 - *Judges 21:23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.*
- 12 A woman who was not betrothed but was raped was compelled to become the wife of the rapist. The rapist was expected to pay the woman’s father fifty silver pieces as the bride price.
- *Deuteronomy 22:28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.*

- 13 A man who raped a betrothed woman was to die. Nothing was to be done to the woman if she cried out for help.
- *Deuteronomy 22:25 But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die:*
- 14 The wedding feast was a very important ceremony. Food was shared and the details of the relationships were formalized (Genesis 26:28-30 cf. Genesis 31:54; 2 Samuel 3:20). Salt in the food symbolized the binding of the provisions (study Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; Ezekiel 43:24).
- 15 Children did not have much choice in the matter of who they would marry. Marriage was a business transaction reflected in the story of Jacob with Leah and Rachel.
- 16 Different commodities were offered to buy the bride. Jacob labored for his wives (Genesis 30:15-30) while Shechem offered land for Dinah (Genesis 34:12). David was required to produce a very unusual item as payment for Michal (1 Samuel 18:17-25).
- 17 The wedding feast was extravagant. Wine flowed freely (John 2:1-10). The wealthy would provide an abundance of food (Matthew 22:4).
- 18 To reject a wedding invitation was a grave insult (Matthew 22:1-7).
- 19 Guests who came to the weddings were expected to be dressed appropriately (Matthew 22:11).
- 20 The bride left her father's home accompanied by her bridesmaids amidst shouts of joy (Psalm 45).
- 21 The first intimate encounter took place in an area provided by the bride's family. As proof of her virginity, the bride's family kept the sheets from the wedding night. Blood from the tearing of the hymen was expected to be preserved.
- *Deuteronomy 22:13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14 And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15 Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; 19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20 But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel:*

- 21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.*
- 22 There were no requirements of virginity for men. Furthermore, it was hard to charge them with adultery because of the practice of polygamy and the acceptance of concubines. However, if a man was caught in a provable adulterous liaison, he could be stoned to death.
- *Deuteronomy 22:22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.*
- 23 A woman who was accused of adultery by her husband was subjected to a series of unusual tests.
- *Numbers 5:11 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, 13 And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; 14 And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled: 15 Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16 And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord: 17 And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: 18 And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse: 19 And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: 20 But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: 21 Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell;*

22 *And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen. 23 And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water: 24 And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter. 25 Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and offer it upon the altar: 26 And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water. 27 And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people. 28 And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed.*

24 In the book of Proverbs there were two kinds of women: good and bad. (Proverbs 12:6; 18:22) The good wife was hard working and able to be trusted. (Proverbs 12:24; 31:10-31) She was affectionate (Proverbs 5:19), quiet, and peaceful (cf. 1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1, 6).

25 If a marriage was dissolved, the power was with the husband. Despite the fact that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) it was common among the Jews. A wife could be divorced for adultery (Jeremiah 3:8; Matt 19:9) and for any trivial reason as well (Deuteronomy 24:1).

26 Once a man determined to divorce his wife he was to give her a written decree before dismissing her from the home.

- *Deuteronomy 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.*
- *Jeremiah 3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*
- *Isaiah 50:1 Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

27 The certificate of divorce had the practical effect of making the woman available for remarriage to someone else.

- *Deuteronomy 24:2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.*

- 28 If the woman did remarry, her first husband was not to reclaim her—though King David did exactly that with Michal. (1 Samuel 18:20-27; 1 Samuel 25:44) Technically, he could reclaim her for he had not divorced her in the first place. (2 Samuel 3:14-16) In the case of Hosea claiming his wife after he divorced, he could do so because he had not remarried (Hosea 2:2).
- 29 During the days of the New Testament, women had been given the authority to divorce their husbands.