

## Doctrine of Polygamy

1. Polygamy may be defined as the practice of having several spouses, especially wives, at one time.
2. Polygamy includes polygyny (marriage to more than one woman) and polyandry (marriage to more than one man).
3. The first case of polygamy mentioned in the Bible is that of a man named Lamech.
  - *Genesis 4:19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.*
4. The practice was widespread in the ancient world reflected in the fact that Abraham took Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant of his wife Sarah, to be his wife when Sarah was unable to bear a child.
  - *Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.*
5. Abraham's son, Isaac, had only one wife but Abraham's grandson, Jacob, took two wives in the persons of Leah and Rachel and two concubines, Zilpah and Bilhah (Genesis 29:15-30:13).
6. The Bible presents monogamy as the divine ideal. The Creator made marriage as a union between one man and one woman.
  - *Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. 19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

- *Matthew 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*
  - *1 Corinthians 6:16 What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*
7. Polygamy, like divorce, was tolerated because of the hardness of peoples' hearts.
- *Matthew 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*
8. After the time of Moses, polygamy continued to be practiced especially by the rich such as Elkanah and David.
- *Elkanah. 1 Samuel 1:2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.*
  - *David. 2 Samuel 5:13 And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.*
9. The most famous polygamist in the Bible was King Solomon:
- *1 Kings 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.*
10. The greatest evil of polygamy is that this sexual sin turns the heart away from God.
- *Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.*
11. The ideal king to whom Israel's obedience could be rightly given was one whom did not "multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away."