

Divorce and Remarriage (Copyright) by Jesse McLemore (United States)

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Articles

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While this study is entitled "Divorce and Remarriage," we will be discussing much more than this. This is easily the longest study I have ever written and due to the conflicting opinions on this issue, along with the serious ramifications for being wrong, I saw a need to not just limit my study to "divorce & remarriage" alone. This study will examine topics ranging from the importance of marrying a believer, to the scriptural view of polygamy, to the ways in which a believer can win the heart of an unbelieving spouse. Having a scriptural understanding of these matters all weigh heavily on having a biblical view of Divorce and Remarriage.

The topic of Divorce and Remarriage is one of the most controversial issues in the body of Messiah today. One of the reasons it is so controversial is the breakdown of the holy institution of marriage in our cultures. With over half of marriages ending in divorce, and some studies indicating the rate to be even higher than that in Christian homes, it is no wonder. The world's solution to the problem has been for a man and woman to live together before marriage and basically live the married life with the other partner to see if the relationship is good enough to last a lifetime. If you include the

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separations of people who choose this lifestyle in the divorce statistics, the "divorce" rate would be much higher. But the problem isn't that people aren't marrying the one they love. The real problem is people are not loving the one they marry!

The understanding I have come to on this topic is probably unlike anything you have ever seen. Generally, there are two predominant views on Divorce and Remarriage. One says that it is never acceptable to Divorce and Remarry, but the other one gives an exception for cases of adultery. I do not believe that either of these two understandings are correct. It seems to me that both beliefs tend to ignore certain scriptures that I do not want to ignore. There is a third alternative that will bring all the scriptures together on this issue. I would strongly encourage you to read this study from beginning to end before coming to any conclusions.

In the Beginning

To properly understand divorce and remarriage, it is necessary to have a good understanding of what the purposes of marriage are to begin with. The foundation is already laid out for us in the first few chapters of Genesis. For this reason, we will spend some time examining this.

Genesis 2:23-24 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 a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

According to this scripture, when woman was created Yahweh ordained that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. In light of the fact that she was "taken out of man", their joining together will result in them being "one flesh". It is pretty evident that at this time, there was no such thing as divorce. Adam and Eve were created to be together, one flesh, with no separation at all. In their unity, Yahweh wanted them to "be fruitful and multiply":

Genesis 1:28 Then Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We are the children of Elohim. So, in light of the fact that we were created in the image of Elohim, it is also evident that Yahweh desires for us to multiply a "seed of Elohim". This is why man and woman are "one":

Malachi 2:15a But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring (Heb. "seed of Elohim").

So, Yahweh is interested in using us to bear His children, though it is not yet revealed what we shall be in the future:

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of Elohim; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

In spite of the beautiful plan Yahweh implemented in the garden, man chose his own plan. Because of man's sin, man was no longer in the image and glory of Yahweh. Yahweh's image is a sinless and righteous image. But every one of us have fallen short of His glory:

John 5:19 Then Yahushua answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

Because of the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden, we are no longer in the image and glory of Yahweh. Yahweh's image is a sinless and righteous image. Every one of us have fallen short of His glory:

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of Elohim,

For this reason, we need to rely upon the One who is the image and glory of Yahweh: Yahushua the Messiah...

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on

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high,

Through Him, we are righteous, and we are again in His image. But we must be dead to self and alive unto Messiah. In baptism, we participate in Yahushua's death and resurrection.

Colossians 2:11-13 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Messiah, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of Elohim, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

And again...

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Messiah; it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of Elohim, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

So, our former man is no more, and it is Yahushua who now lives in us. These things are important to understand so that we can fully grasp the will of Yahweh for marriage: A man and woman made "one flesh" by Yahweh to rule over creation and bear other children of Elohim who will do the same. So, to review, let's summarize the points:

- We were created in the image of Elohim
- Woman was taken out of man, and when they are joined together, they are "one flesh."
- As "one flesh", it is Yahweh's plan for us to be fruitful and multiply, bearing more children of Elohim
- Adam and Eve sinned, causing them to no longer be a true image of Elohim.
- Yahushua came and redeemed us. Through Him, we are again in His image as the children of Elohim. It is no longer we who live, but Yahushua who lives in us.

Is divorce lawful for any reason?

Understanding these things as a foundation will help us to understand the various scriptures which deal with divorce and remarriage. Obviously, divorce was never Yahweh's intent when He created man and woman. Thus, divorce is never Yahweh's ultimate will today either. Yahweh's ultimate will is that we will love and serve Him and through marriage we will bear children who will do the same. So, when men and women of Yahweh are joined together as one flesh through marriage, there is to be no divorce at all. This was Yahushua's exact point in Matthew 19:

Matthew 19:3-9 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate."

Notice that Yahushua said, "**have you not read...**?" He indicated that they should have already known the answer to that question if they had only read about it in Genesis. Just as this study has done and will continue to do, Yahushua pointed out the plan of Yahweh for man and woman. And He added, "**what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate.**" When Yahweh does something, we should never try to change it. Any effort to change the things that Yahweh establishes is obviously not His true will for us.

To this, the Pharisees wondered why Moshe would ever permit divorce:

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" 8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

In the above two verses, notice that the Pharisees said that Moshe commanded to give a certificate of divorce, but Yahushua said that Moshe "permitted you to divorce your wives." I find this to be quite interesting and I think it warrants an investigation as to whether it was commanded or permitted. The scripture in question is Deuteronomy 24. We will first

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examine these verses in King James Version:

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

Notice it says here, "let him write" her a bill of divorcement. "Let him write" is actually a mistranslation of the Hebrew word "w'katab". The w' at the beginning of the word is a particle conjunction, commonly translated "and". Also, it says in this translation, "she may go" and be another man's wife. The word translated "she may go" is mistranslation of "w'halkah" because it ignores the particle injunction completely. I'm far from being alone in this assessment. Later translations recognized this and made the necessary corrections:

(New King James) Deuteronomy 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, **and** he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, 2 "**when she has departed** from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife,

(New Revised Standard) Deuteronomy 24:1 Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, **and** so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house 2 **and goes off** to become another man's wife.

(New International Version) Deuteronomy 24:1 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, **and** he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, 2 **and if after she leaves** his house she becomes the wife of another man,

(The Scriptures) Deuteronomy 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and shall marry her, then it shall be, if she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found a matter of uncoveredness in her, **and** he shall write her a certificate of divorce, and put it in her hand, and send her out of his house, 2 **and if she left** his house and went and became another man's wife,

(New American Standard) Deuteronomy 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, **and** he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2 **and she leaves** his house and goes and becomes another man's wife,

The reason why this is important is because it completely changes the meaning of Deuteronomy 24. Rather than the scripture being a ruling on whether or not divorce and remarriage is permissible ("let him write her a bill of divorcement" and "she may go and be another man's wife"), or for what reasons divorce would be permissible, it actually is a ruling on whether a man can take back his divorced wife after she has been married to another man.

Read it with this in mind:

(New American Standard) Deuteronomy 24:1-4 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, 4 then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before Yahweh, and you shall not bring sin on the land which Yahweh your Elohim gives you as an inheritance.

So, the issue here is not one of whether Yahweh agrees with divorcing, or even the reasons for which a man may divorce his wife, but whether a man can take back his former wife after she married someone else. The answer is, "**that is an**

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abomination before Yahweh." In fact, she is considered "defiled" after she married another man.

This is interesting because there are a number of "Divorce/Remarriage" books or studies which state that a marriage is always a marriage in Yahweh's eyes, so a person in a remarriage situation should go back to their first spouse. But Yahweh considers this to be an "abomination" so I cannot agree with such a thing. I don't believe anything that is an "abomination" in the Torah is suddenly acceptable in the "New Testament". In the same way Yahweh has not changed His mind about what He wants from marriage, Yahweh has not changed His mind about what He considers to be an abomination.

Nevertheless, it is true (as Yahushua said) that Moshe did not forbid divorce. Yahushua said the reason He permitted it was due to "the hardness of your hearts." This is an interesting statement when you consider all the things that Yahweh did forbid in the Torah. For at first glance, it might seem strange that Yahweh would be concerned about the condition of a person's beard (forbidden to cut the corners off) but then wouldn't issue a command forbidding divorce. One might wonder why Yahweh didn't consider the hardness of their hearts when He made other commandments in the Torah which they clearly stumbled over numerous times. So why was divorce not forbidden by Moshe in the Torah?

Marital disasters

Let's again recall the purpose for marriage to begin with. Yahweh joins together a man and woman to be one flesh so that they can bear a "seed of Elohim." For this reason, it is very important for us to seek Yahweh's counsel when we choose a husband or wife to marry.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

It is not Yahweh's will for us to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, especially in marriage. Aside from choosing to believe in Yahweh, it is probably the most important decision a believer will ever make. When Yahweh made a promise to Abraham that He would make a great nation of his children, notice what He said about Abraham:

Genesis 18:19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice, that Yahweh may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

Yahweh knew that Abraham would command his children and his household to keep Yahweh's ways. In this, the plan of Yahweh for man and woman is fulfilled. Abraham made sure that when it was time for his son to get married, it would be a decision led by Yahweh:

Genesis 24:2-7 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3 "and I will make you swear by Yahweh, the Elohim of heaven and the Elohim of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4 "but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 5 And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6 But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. 7 "Yahweh Elohim of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

Isaac and Rebekah also desired the same for Jacob:

Genesis 27:46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" 28:1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 "Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. 3 "May El Shaddai bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; 4 And give you the

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blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which Elohim gave to Abraham."

In fact, the Torah expressly forbids a person from marrying sons or daughters who were from specific nations:

Deuteronomy 7:1-4 When Yahweh your Elohim brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 "and when Yahweh your Elohim delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. 3 "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of Yahweh will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

Yahweh was very concerned that any family would allow their children to intermarry with these seven nations because He knew the influence it would have. His plan for their marriages to produce the "Seed of Elohim" (And thus a righteous kingdom in Israel!) would be ruined. Through the marriage to these heathen nations, their children would end up being children of the devil when their hearts were turned away from following Yahweh and toward wickedness.

1John 3:10 - In this the children of YAHWEH and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of YAHWEH, nor is he who does not love his brother.

Such marriages would produce children that would advance satan's kingdom rather than Yahweh's kingdom. The corrupting influence would spread like leaven, and the entire kingdom of Israel would fall. So, Joshua also gave warning:

Joshua 23:11-13 Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love Yahweh your Elohim. 12 "Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations -- these that remain among you -- and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, 13 "know for certain that Yahweh your Elohim will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which Yahweh your Elohim has given you.

We need not look far to find examples of this very thing happening in Israel. Though Solomon was the wisest of all kings, he did not walk in this wisdom and it resulted in much heartache and pain for his children:

1 Kings 11:1-11 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites -- 2 from the nations of whom Yahweh had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to Yahweh his Elohim, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of Yahweh, and did not fully follow Yahweh, as did his father David. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 9 So Yahweh became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from Yahweh Elohim of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what Yahweh had commanded. 11 Therefore Yahweh said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.

Israel was split into two kingdoms (the northern and southern tribes; Israel & Judah). The aftermath of Solomon's decision to marry unbelieving wives resulted in the introduction of idolatry to that generation and caused much heartache and pain in years to come. Solomon's son (Rehoboam) ended up forsaking Yahweh's law:

2 Chronicles 12:1 Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of Yahweh, and all Israel along with him.

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Israel's king, Jeroboam, served idols and every succeeding king of Israel chose to walk in idolatry. One example of that is Ahab.

1 Kings 16:30-32 Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh, more than all who were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

Jezebel was the woman who turned the heart of Ahab to worship Baal. Yahweh punished Ahab and described him as one who "**sold himself**" to do evil:

1 Kings 21:22 I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin.' 23 "And concerning Jezebel Yahweh also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' 24 "The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field." 25 But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of Yahweh, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. 26 And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom Yahweh had cast out before the children of Israel. 27 So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. 28 And the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."

Notice that Ahab did seem to have a fear of Yahweh, but it seems that his wife was an influence too great to overcome. This is evident in other places as well. But as if it weren't bad enough that this marriage brought down the house of Ahab and all of Israel, this marriage would also result in the fall of Jehoshaphat's house and Judah as well! Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah (the southern kingdom) at the same time that Ahab was the king of Israel (the northern kingdom). He was considered a righteous king:

2 Chronicles 17:3-4 Now Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, 4 but sought the Elohim of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel.

However, we read that King Ahab wanted to make an alliance with Jehoshaphat:

1 Kings 22:3-4 And the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?" 4 So he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

Sadly, Jehoshaphat sought to align himself with Ahab and even said "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses". He even went so far as to join himself with Ahab in marriage:

2 Chronicles 18:1 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab.

This marriage alliance resulted in Jehoshaphat's son (Jehoram) marrying one of the daughters of Ahab & Jezebel. Guess what happened to Jehoshaphat's son?

2 Kings 8:16-18 Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat having been king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat began to reign as king of Judah. 17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of Yahweh.

So as a result of Jehoshaphat having his son marry an unbeliever, it turned the heart of his son away from Yahweh. And ultimately, the marriage also turned Judah away from Yahweh:

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2 Chronicles 21:11-15 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray. 12 And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says Yahweh Elohim of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself, 14 behold, Yahweh will strike your people with a serious affliction -- your children, your wives, and all your possessions; 15 and you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.

What a disaster the marriage of Ahab & Jezebel wrought upon all of the children of Judah! Yahweh even used EliYah the prophet to try and turn Israel back to Yahweh by proving Yahweh is Elohim at the contest on Mount Carmel, but it was to no avail as long as Ahab was married to Jezebel (1Kings 18).

King Jehoram and Jezebel's daughter had a son named Ahaziah who (of course) was also wicked:

2 Kings 8:26-27 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel. 27 And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of Yahweh, like the house of Ahab, for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

Therefore, Athaliah was the name of Jezebel's daughter who married Jehoshaphat's son. So wicked was this woman, she ultimately ended up killing all of her grandchildren and taking over the helm as "Queen" until she was finally killed (2Kings 11).

So, it was these kinds of marriages that produced disastrous results in their children and in society as a whole, just as Yahweh predicted in the Torah. Yahweh expelled Israel from the land and their children were scattered to the wind. Yahweh then expelled Judah from the land of Israel for 70 years. When Judah returned to Jerusalem, the people and even the priests were strongly rebuked by Nehemiah for (again!) marrying pagan wives:

Nehemiah 13:23-27 In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. 24 And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. 25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by Elohim, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. 26 "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his Elohim; and Elohim made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. 27 "Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our Elohim by marrying pagan women?"

Nehemiah considered this a "great evil" and fought with them, pulling out their hair and cursing them for this transgression of the Torah. He pointed out that even Solomon was not immune to the corrupting influence of pagan wives.

Now some say that the issue was not that the women were pagan, but that they were women from another nation. But notice that Nehemiah rebuked them for marrying women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Ashdod, Ammon and Moab were not among the seven forbidden nations mentioned in the Torah. The seven forbidden nations were the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. So why did Nehemiah condemn them so strongly? The real issue wasn't the woman's lineage, but whether or not she served Yahweh. For even Ruth (King David's great grandmother) was from Moab, but she feared Yahweh (Ruth 1-4). And in the Torah, the Israelites were permitted to marry captive women (Deut. 21:11).

Let's read about this again in Ezra, another book written in the same era. Notice how grievous this sin was considered to be, and what they did to rectify it:

Ezra 9:1-15 When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations

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of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 "For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass." 3 So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard and sat down astonished. 4 Then everyone who trembled at the words of the Elohim of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. 5 At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to Yahweh my Elohim. 6 And I said: "O my Elohim, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my Elohim; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. 7 "Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day. 8 "And now for a little while grace has been shown from Yahweh our Elohim, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our Elohim may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. 9 "For we were slaves. Yet our Elohim did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our Elohim, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. 10 "And now, O our Elohim, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, 11 "which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. 12 'Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.' 13 "And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our Elohim have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this, 14 "should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? 15 "O Yahweh Elohim of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!"

Ezra 10:1-17 Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of Elohim, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our Elohim, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. 3 "Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our Elohim to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our Elohim; and let it be done according to the law. 4 "Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it." 5 Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. 6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of Elohim and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. 7 And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem, 8 and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the instructions of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity. 9 So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of Elohim, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain. 10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. 11 "Now therefore, make confession to Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives." 12 Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do. 13 "But there are many people; it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter. 14 "Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our Elohim is turned away from us in this matter." 15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them

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support. 16 Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' households, were set apart by the fathers' households, each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. 17 By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives.

Yahweh desires a "Seed of Elohim" from a "one flesh" relationship. He wants us and our children to be holy as He is holy. Such marriages result in our seed being corrupted due to the pagan influence. Their decision to divorce these women was a major event that took 2-3 months to complete. It needed to be handled on a case-by-case basis. Not all foreigners are necessarily unbelievers or pagans. Other women would undoubtedly be from nations not forbidden in the Torah (such as Egypt in vs. Ezra 9:1), yet the women were still not believers in Yahweh.

This issue is again mentioned by Malachi, a prophet who also lived during this same time:

Malachi 2:10-11 Have we not all one Father? Has not one Elohim created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers? 11 Judah has dealt treacherously, And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, For Judah has profaned Yahweh's holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign elohim. 12 May Yahweh cut off from the tents of Jacob The man who does this, being awake and aware, Yet who brings an offering to Yahweh of hosts!

What is the holy institution that Yahweh loves? It is marriage. And marrying the "daughter of a foreign elohim" was a way of profaning Yahweh's holy institution. These kinds of marriages are considered to be "an abomination" in Yahweh's eyes that can result in Yahweh cutting a person off.

Can we see why Yahweh is so upset by this? Again, when Yahweh created man and woman, it was not His intent that they "be fruitful and multiply" children of the devil, but "be fruitful and multiply" children of Yahweh. To multiply children of the devil is not being fruitful for Yahweh at all. As we see in the various examples given, marriages between believers and unbelievers produce bad fruit. For this reason, it is very important that parents and their children are extremely careful about who they choose to marry, and that they are sure Yahweh is the one making the decision. I hope that these things drive home this point in the minds of all who read this, especially the minds of young people. To marry an unbeliever is an abomination in the eyes of Yahweh! Don't even take it into consideration and don't desire them.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

For those who are married to a believing wife, it is quite evident even in the "Old Testament" that Yahweh is not pleased with a man divorcing them. Let's continue reading in Malachi 2 where we left off:

Malachi 2:13-16 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. 14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because Yahweh has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring (**Heb. seed of Elohim**). Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 16 "For Yahweh Elohim of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says Yahweh of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

It is apparent by reading these verses in Malachi that the men of that era were actually divorcing the wives of Judah and marrying pagan wives. In Yahweh's eyes, to divorce a wife who does believe in Yahweh is an act of treachery toward her, an act that He hates. Yahweh is seeking a "seed of Elohim" from our children, and He is displeased with anything that would be a barrier to that end, whether it be divorcing wives that believe in Yahweh or marrying wives that do not. So, before Yahushua ever said anything about divorce/remarriage, it is evident that Yahweh not only hates divorce, but He also considers marriages which profane His holy institution to be "an abomination". Notice that back in verse 10 it says, "Have we not all one Father?". Yahweh wants all of us to have one Father, both parents and children. He wants to be our Father and He wants all of us to be His children. We ought not deal treacherously with one another through divorcing a believing wife or profane Yahweh's holy institution by marrying an unbelieving wife. Both are huge stumbling blocks to our children being the "Seed of Elohim" that Yahweh seeks.

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The hardness of hearts

Getting back to Yahushua's statement that Moshe permitted divorce because of the "hardness of your hearts", this indeed is an interesting statement when you consider all the things that Yahweh did forbid in the Torah. One might wonder why Yahweh didn't consider the hardness of their hearts when He made other commandments in the Torah which they clearly stumbled over numerous times. Let's remember that the children of Israel were not faithful children in the wilderness and Yahweh knew that they would not be faithful children in the generations to come. In light of this, let's examine Yahushua's statement "hardness of your hearts":

Matthew 19:7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away? 8 "He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

The Greek word translated "Hardness of your hearts" is #4641 "sklerokardia." This word is also used in the Septuagint, an ancient translation of the "Old Testament" Hebrew scriptures into Greek which was completed 200-300 years before Yahushua was born. Examining the Septuagint's use of Greek words can shed light on their meaning. Notice the 2 verses where this word is used in the Septuagint, compared with the King James Version:

(Septuagint) **Deuteronomy 10:16** Therefore ye shall circumcise the hardness of your heart, and ye shall not harden your neck.

(KJV) **Deuteronomy 10:16** Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

(Septuagint) **Jeremiah 4:4** Circumcise yourselves to your [Elohim], and circumcise your hardness of heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my wrath go forth as fire, and burn, and there be none to quench it, because of the evil of your devices.

(KJV) **Jeremiah 4:4** Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

So, the "hardness of heart" then is understood to be the "foreskins of" their hearts. Their hearts were not circumcised. Throughout all of scripture, a person with an uncircumcised heart is someone who will not repent:

Leviticus 26:40-42 But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, 41 and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt -- 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings."

Jeremiah 9:25-26 Behold, the days are coming," says Yahweh, "that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised -- 26 "Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart."

Acts 7:51-53 You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52 "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53 "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

Romans 2:26-29 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law,

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judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from Elohim.

If someone will not repent, they are not Yahweh's children but are in rebellion. Yahweh says He is going to punish **all** who are uncircumcised in heart. So, the phrase "uncircumcised in heart" and the word "unbeliever" could legitimately be considered synonymous. Those who are of hardened/uncircumcised heart will not believe His word. The foreigners who served idols were often degradingly referred to as the "uncircumcised". Some examples:

Judges 14:3 Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."

1 Samuel 17:26 Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living Elohim?"

Isaiah 52:1 Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean Shall no longer come to you.

When the Torah was given, Israel still had people who were uncircumcised in heart. Yahweh knew that they were not going to remain faithful to Him in the years to come but would be turned aside to idols.

Zechariah 7:12-14 "Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which Yahweh of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts. 13 "Therefore it happened, that just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen," says Yahweh of hosts. 14 "But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known. Thus the land became desolate after them, so that no one passed through or returned; for they made the pleasant land desolate."

Now that we have some understanding of what is meant by "hardness of heart", it becomes easier to see why Yahweh would not outright forbid divorce at that time. Since there were people with hardened hearts in the land of Israel, this meant there were (and would continue to be) unbelieving Israelites in this new nation that Yahweh wanted to establish.

In light of Yahushua's comments about Moshe not forbidding divorce due to the hardness of hearts, it seems that Yahweh wanted to leave a way for faithful Israelites to divorce an Israelite spouse that, while they weren't from one of the forbidden nations to marry, was an unbeliever just the same.

I could see also that if Yahweh had outright forbidden divorce within Israel, those with the hardened hearts would be civilly forbidden to divorce a wife who might be a true handmaiden of Yahweh. She could be ruled over with cruelty and be caused to stumble into the same wickedness, or she would be cast out of the home, forbidden by the civil laws to remarry a husband that feared Yahweh.

But couldn't Yahweh just leave a provision that permitted divorces between believers and unbelievers? It seems to me the last thing Israel needed was any motivation to become an unbeliever. Yahweh didn't want there to be unbelievers in Israel, but He knew that there would be---because of the hardness of their hearts.

Also, consider the long-term implications of Yahweh's decision to not specifically forbid divorce. The truth is anyone with a heart attentive to His word would be able to see that divorce is not His will. The children of Israel were commanded to come together every week and have a 'holy convocation' on the Shabbat. This is when the Torah would be heard by people who seek Yahweh. Keep in mind that at the time the Torah was given, there was nothing other than the 5 books (Genesis through Deuteronomy). There was no book of "Isaiah" or "Psalms" or "New Testament". With this in mind, if you read the book of Genesis, the will of Yahweh for marriage is quite clear. Divorce is never mentioned, and you won't find any example of divorce in Genesis. The first-time divorce is mentioned in the Torah is when Yahweh forbids a priest

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from marrying a divorced woman.

Leviticus 21:7 'They shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his Elohim.

In fact, when divorce is mentioned in Deuteronomy 24, the divorced and remarried wife is called "defiled":

Deuteronomy 24:4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Yahweh: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which Yahweh thy Elohim giveth thee for an inheritance.

To those with ears to hear, a clear impression is given. Divorce is not really part of Yahweh's plan for Israel, and it is not the will of Yahweh. So, it makes sense that when Yahushua was asked if a man can "divorce his wife for any reason?", He gave this answer:

Matthew 19:4-5 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

"Have you not read...???" The first book in the Torah tells us what Yahweh's plan for marriage is! It's all laid out there in the beginning of the Torah. Therefore, those who did not have a hardened heart would see clearly what Yahweh's will for them truly is. Those who did have a hardened heart would be looking for reasons to divorce their wives, but those who didn't have a hardened heart would see that it's important not to marry an unbeliever and would never divorce a believing wife.

Consider now, what would the fruits of this be for Israel? Those with hardened hearts would have troubled, broken homes. But those attentive to the message in Genesis would have peaceful, holy, and loving homes with happy children that will typically want the same for their families.

Even in our own generation it is evident that those who grow up in broken homes where their parents are divorced are far more likely to have children who rebel against their parents' way of doing things. And when such children see the Yahweh-centered, peaceful, loving, and secure homes of the righteous, they will be compelled to want the same for their children. I see no reason why it would have been any different in ancient Israel.

When we consider that there were so many within the nation of Israel with hardened/uncircumcised hearts, and we look at the options available and the ramifications of each, it is easy to see why Yahweh made the decision to not forbid divorce in Israel. According to Yahushua, the lack of a commandment forbidding divorce is more so a commentary on their hardness of their hearts than a revelation of Yahweh's will for us. Yahweh's will for us is outlined in Genesis 1 & 2. Let's hear His voice and let not our hearts be hardened, as in the rebellion. Let's not be among those with hardened hearts! Let's fulfill the word of Yahweh!

Except for "porneia"?

Yahushua clearly sought to bring us back to Yahweh's plan He wanted from the very beginning; the first part of the Torah; Man and woman being "one flesh" to "be fruitful and multiply" children of Elohim. In this, Yahushua was not contradicting the Torah but was bringing us back to the way Yahweh intended all along. So, let's also interpret what He said in this light:

(NKJV) Matthew 19:3-10 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate." 7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" 8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits

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adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." 10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

The above phrase "sexual immorality" (translated "fornication" in the King James version) is from the Greek word [#4202 "porneia"](#). Most people assume that He was only talking about some literal, "physical porneia" that violates the marital relationship. However, there is another meaning behind the word "porneia" that is usually overlooked.

The Strong's Lexicon defines this word as follows:

porneia por-ni'-ah from 4203; harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry: --fornication.

Notice that the term can figuratively refer to "idolatry". Examples of this usage are plentiful in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 14:8-9 And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her **fornication**." 9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,

Revelation 17:1-4 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 "with whom the kings of the earth committed **fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her **fornication**." 3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her **fornication**.

Revelation 18:2-3 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her **fornication**, the kings of the earth have committed **fornication** with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

Revelation 19:2 For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her **fornication**; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her."

Other examples of this figurative language is found throughout the Law & Prophets. Here are a couple of examples:

Exodus 34:13-16 But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images 14 '(for you shall worship no other elohim, for Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous Elohim), 15 "lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they **play the harlot** with their elohim and make sacrifice to their elohim, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, 16 "and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their elohim and make your sons play the harlot with their elohim."

Leviticus 17:7 They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have **played the harlot**. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations." '

The use of this word "porneia" to refer to idolatry is quite frequent throughout the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the "Old Testament" that was in use at the time. This word family ([#4202 "porneia"](#)) is used 36 times in the Septuagint. A remarkable fact is how this word family is used. It is used to describe physical marital unfaithfulness only twice, but it is used to describe the spiritual harlotry/idolatry 36 times! The complete list of these verses are as follows: Genesis 38:24; Numbers 14:33; 2 Kings 9:22; Isaiah 47:10; 57:9; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:2, 9; 13:27; Ezekiel 16:15, 22, 25, 33f, 36, 41; 23:7f, 11, 14, 17ff, 27, 29, 35; 43:7, 9; Hosea 1:2; 2:4, 6; 4:11f; 5:4; 6:10; Micah 1:7; Nah. 3:4. I have also studied the Hebrew Matthew (DuTillet version) of Matthew 19:9 and found that it uses Hebrew word #2184 "zenuth", a noun which means "whoredom". Out of the 9 times it is used in the "Old Testament", it is used to describe idolatry 7 times with the other 2 instances being unclear whether idolatry or literal whoredom is intended. The complete list is: Num. 14:33; Jer. 3:2, 9;

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13:27; Ezek. 23:27; 43:7, 9; Hos. 4:11; 6:10.

In consideration of the core meanings of "zenuth" and "porneia", they certainly could possibly be used to describe literal harlotry. But since "zenuth" and "porneia" are used so frequently to describe idolatry, it is certainly worth investigating whether or not Yahushua could have been allowing for divorce when a person is married to a spouse who is an idolater/unbeliever. This is especially true when you consider the Torah based prohibition against marriages to unbelievers, the examples of disastrous marriages to unbelievers, the importance stressed on bearing righteous children of Elohim, the divorce of pagan wives in the book of Ezra, and the fact that Yahushua said it was the hardness of hearts that inspired Moshe to not outright forbid divorce.

1 Corinthians 7- "yet not I, but the Master"

To help us understand Yahushua's words, let's examine an important passage in 1 Corinthians which can help shed some light on what Yahushua truly meant by 'porneia':

1 Corinthians 7:10 Now to the married I command, **yet not I but the Master**: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

In the above statement, we see that Paul is telling the Corinthians about the commandment that a wife is not permitted to depart from her husband, and a husband is not to divorce his wife (the fact that her departing results in divorce is evidenced by Paul's statement that if she departs let her "remain unmarried.") Notice carefully that Paul said this is not his own commandment, but the Master's commandment. Paul would not have been getting this command from the Law of Moshe because Yahushua clearly said that Moshe permitted divorce. Therefore, Paul was evidently referring to Yahushua's words when He commanded us to not separate what Elohim has joined together:

Matthew 19:4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate."

Paul's statements that a wife is not to depart from her husband and a husband is not to divorce his wife is certainly very much in line with what Yahushua was saying here. The Master Yahushua has certainly commanded us not to separate what Elohim has joined together. In fact, Yahushua stated several times that if one were to separate what Elohim has joined together and marry another, it is committing adultery:

Matthew 19:9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Matthew 5:32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Mark 10:11-12 So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 "And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Luke 16:18 Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

For this reason, Paul said, "I command, **yet not I but the Master**" and also said "but even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband". She would have to remain unmarried in order to avoid committing adultery against her husband. So, Paul clearly stated that there is to be no divorce and remarriage at all!

But what about this exception? Exactly like Yahushua, Paul also dealt with an exception to this rule. In fact, the exception Paul mentions supports the understanding that "porneia" can refer to divorces between a believer and unbeliever:

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Master: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to

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dwell with him, let him not put her away.

Please take a minute and pay close attention to what Paul is saying here. Notice that Paul declares he is speaking on his own, and not what the Master Himself has commanded. This is extremely important to understand, but not because Paul was necessarily wrong in his opinion! Rather, the fact that he clearly told us it was his *own opinion* (not a commandment from the Master) that a believer and unbeliever should remain together if possible shows that Yahushua's statement "What Elohim has joined together let not man separate" did NOT include marriages between a believer and an unbeliever! Does this not shed light on what Yahushua could have meant with the exception He gave? YES. The Master Yahushua never commanded that a believer and unbeliever must remain married! If He did, Paul would have said "To the rest speak I, yet not I, but the Master" when saying the believer should not divorce the unbeliever.

Yahushua did not forbid divorce and remarriage in all cases. He made an exception for "porneia" (or in Hebrew, "zenuth"), a word that very commonly meant "idolatry" throughout the Torah and prophets. This being the case, it is perfectly understandable why Paul would make it clear that Yahushua never commanded a believer to remain married to an unbeliever. Paul was not lying when He said the Master did not command this. In fact, all of scripture forbids a believer from marrying an unbeliever in the first place.

1 Corinthians 7:12-13 But to the rest speak I, not the Master: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

Now let's consider the reasons why Paul said they should remain together in this case. First of all, we are not dealing with a situation where a believer was looking for a wife and found an unbeliever to marry. That is clearly a sin. This is dealing with a situation where a person was already married to an unbeliever when they came to faith in Messiah, but their spouse has not come to faith as of yet.

So, Paul encourages the believer to stay with the unbeliever if the unbeliever is "pleased to dwell with" the believer. But what about Yahweh's plan for man and woman to become "one flesh" and "be fruitful and multiply" a "seed of Elohim" for Yahweh? Wouldn't such a marriage cause their children to be defiled with idolatry? How would this fit with Yahushua's statements regarding Yahweh's plan? Paul must have known the first question to be asked in these situations is, "What about the believer and his/her children being corrupted?" The next thing he said was:

1 Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Why would the children be clean in this instance? Again, Paul stated that only in the event where the unbeliever is "pleased to dwell" with the believer should they remain together. An unbeliever who is "pleased to dwell" with a believer would not be someone who is rebellious and wicked toward Yahweh. In most cases, such a person would not be "pleased to dwell" with the believer because a rebellious person living in darkness does not want to dwell with light.

John 3:20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Now at the same time most all of us at one time were practicing evil but were drawn to the light and eventually desired the forgiveness and salvation offered through Yahushua the Messiah. In the case of an unbeliever not being necessarily rebellious or hard hearted toward the faith of Yahweh, there is potential there for the spouse to be converted to the faith as well. More on this later...

An important question is, "How and why is the unbelieving spouse sanctified by the believing spouse?" If the believing spouse is holy, and the unbeliever is not rebellious, the unbeliever is sanctified, and the children are holy also. For the children are not being corrupted by rebellion and hard-heartedness in such instances. Since the unbelieving spouse is not rebellious and it is not yet known whether they will come to salvation in Messiah, it is possible that the marriage is indeed one that Elohim has joined together as "one flesh" to produce a holy "seed of Elohim" if patience is exercised and Yahushua is revealed to them through the Messiah-like example of the believing spouse.

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1 Corinthians 7:14-17 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But Elohim has called us to peace. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? 17 But as Elohim has distributed to each one, as the Master has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

So, consistent with the theme in many of Paul's letters, we are encouraged to remain in the same calling in which we are called and patiently let Yahweh work through the issues in our life. In the case of an unbeliever being called while married to another unbeliever, we are encouraged to remember that we are called to peace and we need not create for ourselves unnecessary division in our homes, but that if the unbeliever creates the division--whether it be by departing, or by rebellion/hard heartedness toward Yahweh--we should remember that we are not under bondage in such cases.

The meaning of the phrase "not under bondage in such cases" has been the subject of numerous debates between those holding opposing viewpoints on the divorce/remarriage issue. Those who believe a person can remarry after divorcing an unbeliever interpret it as Paul giving the authorization to do so. Those who believe a person cannot remarry interpret this as not being bound to fulfilling the normal marital duties if the unbelieving spouse departs. So how one interprets this statement depends on how you view all of the other scriptures on this issue. To help us decide what Paul meant by this, let's review the full context of what He was saying.

1 Corinthians 7:10-15 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Master: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. 12 But to the rest I, not the Master, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But Elohim has called us to peace.

From these verses, a summary would be:

- The Master Yahushua commanded that there is to be no divorce between believers.
- If a believing woman departs from her husband, she is not permitted to remarry. That would be adultery per Yahushua's words.
- The Master Yahushua did not command a believer to remain married to an unbeliever.
- If the unbeliever departs, the believer is not in bondage in such cases. This would be in line with Yahushua's 'porneia' exception if this meant the believer could remarry.

Looking at the context, there are clearly 2 situations being addressed. The marriage of two believers and the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever.

When Paul speaks of two believers being married, he says they are not to divorce, but if the wife departs, they are to remain unmarried or reconciled to her husband. This is consistent with Yahushua's words in Matthew 19. But when speaking of a believer being married to an unbeliever, Paul says Yahushua didn't command them to stay together--but if the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, let them remain together. Does this not clearly beg the question, "What if the unbeliever leaves, do I also have to remain unmarried?" Since Paul dealt with that question in the other scenario by saying "if the wife departs, she is to remain unmarried", it makes sense that when Paul says "If the unbeliever departs..." he would be addressing the same issue: remarriage. The answer is the believer is not under bondage in such cases. So, if in the one scenario he dealt with the question of remarriage, it would be illogical to think he was talking about something else in the other scenario. Especially when he uses the same wording "if she/they depart..." Some believe Paul should have given the same answer ("remain unmarried") but he did not. This answer is further evidence that marriages between believer & unbeliever are to be included in Yahushua's 'porneia/zenuth' exception.

Yahushua called us to return to the way it was from the very beginning. Man and woman being joined together as "one flesh" to "be fruitful and multiply" a "seed of Elohim". Forbidding remarriage to a believer denies us from fulfilling an important purpose Yahweh had in mind when creating us in the first place.

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Therefore, Paul was forbidding remarriage in the divorce of two believers but permitting remarriage in the divorce of a believer being married to an unbeliever. He spoke in perfect unity with Yahushua's statements in Matthew 19 and elsewhere. Yahushua says that we are not to separate what Yahweh has joined together as one flesh, so divorce and remarriage is forbidden unless the one party commits 'porneia/spiritual harlotry' (becomes an unbeliever). It isn't Yahweh's will for us to be one flesh with a spiritual harlot/rebel. For we do know for a fact that it is not Yahweh's will for us to physically be "one flesh" with a harlot:

1 Corinthians 6:13b Now the body is not for sexual immorality [[#4202 "porneia"](#)] but for the Master, and the Master for the body. 14 And Elohim both raised up the Master and will also raise us up by His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take the members of Messiah and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." 17 But he who is joined to the Master is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality [[#4202 "porneia"](#)] sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from Elohim, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify Elohim in your body and in your spirit, which are Elohim's.

Therefore, if it is not Yahweh's will for us to be one flesh with one who is a physical harlot, why would it be Yahweh's will for us to be "one flesh" with a spiritual harlot? Indeed, the spiritual harlot could be just as dangerous, if not more so! Such a relationship could not be one that "Elohim has joined together" if it is one He clearly forbids in the Torah and all throughout the scriptures.

Now I'm not saying that Yahweh would not call a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever a "marriage". He even calls false deities "elohim" even though they are not elohim. But such marriages are not marriages which "Elohim has joined together" for the purposes of being "fruitful" and multiplying a seed of Elohim. Rather, such marriages are contrary to Yahweh in that they produce children of the devil. If an unbeliever were married to an unbeliever at some point in their life, they were never in a marriage which "Elohim has joined together" for the purposes of being "fruitful" and multiplying a seed of Elohim.

So it is only marriages between two believers that Yahushua declared and commanded "let no man separate". Paul reiterated this when he said, "a wife is not to depart from her husband" and "a husband is not to divorce his wife". Let no man separate what Elohim has joined together! In fact, Yahweh wants believers to go and seek to bring **Him** into all of the marriages in this world so that they will all produce children of Elohim. But if only one spouse chooses to change and the other wants to be wicked and rebellious, shutting their ears to the word with a hardness of heart, we need to remember the Torah. Elohim does not want a believer married to an unbeliever. In fact, it is worse for a believer to be married to a wicked, hard hearted and rebellious unbeliever than for two unbelievers to be together. Darkness is darkness and light is light, but please...please... please don't mix darkness with light! He isn't looking for a mixed seed, He is looking for a pure and undefiled seed of Elohim. Don't mix wickedness with righteousness! This kind of syncretism is what brought Christmas, Easter, and numerous other idolatrous abominations into the body of Messiah in the first place. We can be sure that Elohim does not want the rebelliousness and abominable to be "one flesh" with the righteous, and neither will He allow such. For Yahweh cannot transgress His own word. He considers such marriages to be:

- Malachi 2:11 - "An abomination" which ends up "profaning Yahweh's holy institution which He loves".
- Nehemiah 13:27 - A "great evil, transgressing against our Elohim"
- Ezra 9:2 - A "trespass" which results in mixing the "holy seed" (of Elohim) with the wicked
- Ezra 9:10,14 - "Forsaking the commandments" and "break(ing) Yahweh's commandments"
- Joshua 23:11-13 - "Snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes"

Consider also the following scriptures:

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of Elohim with idols? For you are the temple of the living Elohim. As Elohim has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their Elohim, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And

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be separate, says the Master. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says Yahweh Almighty." 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of Elohim.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with Elohim? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of Elohim.

1 Corinthians 10:20-22 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to Elohim, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Master and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Master's table and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Master to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

Ephesians 5:8-13 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Master. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Master. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

Therefore, the witness of numerous scriptures is clear. Yahweh doesn't want us to be in a marriage that He calls an abomination, a snare, a trap, a trespass against Him, one that profanes Yahweh's holy institution and causes us to be unequally yoked and in fellowship with evil company that corrupts our good habits and the good habits of any children that we might bear. It makes perfect sense that Yahushua would address this also when speaking of divorce and remarriage.

The understanding that Yahushua was speaking of spiritual porneia/idolatry has the support of numerous scriptures and brings all of them together as one unit, speaking the same thing as the full counsel of Elohim. It has the potential to effectively end the confusion and division between many people on this issue.

When we understand this and implement it into our understanding of this issue, the moral integrity of the assembly is upheld, Yahweh's plan for a marriage being the spiritual and physical unity of one man and one woman is upheld, the plan of Yahweh for us to bear a seed of Elohim is upheld, the scriptures in the Torah and "new testament" banning the marriage or mixing of believers/unbelievers is upheld, the scriptures in Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi decrying the marriage of believers with unbelievers is upheld, the decision to divorce the unbelieving wives in the book of Ezra is upheld, the statements Paul made about there being no divorce between believers but divorce being permitted between believers and unbelievers is upheld, and most importantly the families and children in the assembly are not corrupted with leaven, evil company, lawlessness, Belial, idolatry, uncleanness and the unfruitful works of darkness by having the wicked dwelling within our homes. Our homes can be a safe haven, a lamp which gives light to all who enter our homes. And when our homes are full of light, we build a city of peace (Yerushalayim) on a hill which cannot be hidden. The light of Yahushua the Messiah shining through a loving husband and a submissive wife...to all the world. Such a light will draw all of Yahweh's people back to His plan, just as He wanted all along.

Physical "Porneia" exceptions

It is important to remember that when Yahushua said "except it be for porneia/zenuth" in Matthew 19:9, Yahushua was speaking in the context of a literal marriage between a man and a woman. For this reason, there must also be instances of physical 'porneia' which are legitimate reasons for divorce. It would be a challenge to the context if we assumed that Yahushua was speaking of "porneia" only in a spiritual sense when everyone knows that "porneia" also is defined as various sins of the flesh such as adultery, incest, homosexuality, and prostitution.

Now "Porneia" and its Hebrew equivalent ("zenuth) are broad words which can refer to any of these sins exclusively, but it does not always refer to every one of these sins when it is used. To determine the meaning of these words in a sentence, the context must be examined. For example:

1 Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual

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immorality [#4202 "porneia"] as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father's wife!

In the above verse, he isn't talking about homosexuality, prostitution or spiritual harlotry. The "porneia" being spoken of is incest. Another example:

1 Corinthians 6:13-15 Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but Elohim will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality [#4202 "porneia"] but for the Master, and the Master for the body. 14 And Elohim both raised up the Master and will also raise us up by His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take the members of Messiah and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!

In the above example, Paul is speaking of engaging in relations with a prostitute.

Matthew 19:9 "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality [#4202 "porneia"], and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

So, the question is, was Yahushua talking about all types of "porneia" when He mentioned the exception or was He only talking about certain kinds of porneia? Some believe that He was only talking about one specific kind of porneia while others believe He was talking about any and all porneia. In this study we will examine the claims of both.

Divorce of the betrothed?

Some have suggested that the physical 'porneia' is only that which occurred during the betrothal period and not after they had consummated the marriage through intercourse. One of the reasons for this is the fact that Yahushua never mentioned any exception in Luke or Mark.

Mark 10:11-12 So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 "And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Luke 16:18 Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Since no exception is mentioned in the above verses, it supports the belief that the exception would be so rare that it wasn't even worth mentioning. It also supports the belief that between two fully married persons, there is to be no divorce. However, the lack of an exception could also be explained by understanding that Yahushua was not talking to idolaters, but to Israelites who believed in worshipping Yahweh. The likelihood of a Jewish person running off and worshipping Zeus was practically unheard of in the first century. Jews wouldn't even eat with idol worshipping Gentiles, let alone marry them. For example:

Acts 10:28 Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But Elohim has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

So rare would such a divorce be, even the apostles exclaimed "it is better not to marry!"

Matthew 19:9-10 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

So, the response by the apostles even shows that the exception was so rare, that divorce would be practically unheard of in Israel. Thus, they thought it might be better not to marry since you would basically be locked into the marriage forever.

Also consider:

Romans 7:1-3 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as

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long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

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 Yahweh.

These verses are used by some to support the notion that once two people are joined together as one flesh (believer or not), there is to be no divorce at all. But Paul is speaking of marriages between two believers in Yahweh that produce a seed of Elohim. He specifically says, "I speak to those who know the Torah". Since marriages between believers and rebellious unbelievers are forbidden in the Torah, a pagan woman would not be "bound by the Torah" to her husband. Rather, a man would be forbidden from marrying such a woman in the first place. And in fact, they divorced such women in Ezra/Nehemiah. The word translated "bound" in the above verses is also translated "bound" in this scripture:

1 Corinthians 7:27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

Consistent with Paul's counsel that we remain in the same calling in which we are called, he mentions the possibility that a man can be either bound or loosed from a wife. Since he couldn't have been talking about dead men remaining unmarried, there would obviously be instances where a man could be loosed from his wife.

So, Paul would be speaking in the context of marriages between believers. In those cases, it is true that a woman cannot divorce and marry another without committing adultery. He would not be speaking of marriages that are transgressions of the Torah to begin with. So, Romans 7 and 1Corinthians 7:39 would be speaking in the context of marriage the way it was intended in Genesis 1 & 2: a man and woman coming together as "one flesh" to "be fruitful and multiply" a seed of Elohim.

Let's now examine the possibility that Yahushua was only talking about divorces which occur during the betrothal period when He made the exception in Matthew 19:9 and 5:32. Those that hold this view believe the only valid divorces are those which occur prior to a couple coming together as "one flesh" through intercourse. In other words, the only valid divorces are between two people who were betrothed but never had physical relations with one another. To this one might wonder, how could they even be considered married if they haven't come together as "one flesh?" Well, in Israel two "betrothed" persons were considered by everyone to be husband and wife from the day they were betrothed (engaged) to be married. This is quite different than what is commonly practiced today. Today, the promises are exchanged at the wedding. In Israel, the promises are made at the beginning of the betrothal or engagement period. The actual wedding night with the couple coming together as 'one flesh' may not take place for months, or even a year after the betrothal was initiated. So, the formal marriage agreement and contract was initiated at the beginning of the engagement. This fact is evidenced in a number of scriptures. For example:

Deuteronomy 22:23-24 If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24 "then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled **his neighbor's wife**; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

Yahweh considered the virgin in this instance to be "his neighbors wife". So even in Yahweh's eyes, two betrothed persons are husband and wife before the marriage is consummated on the wedding night. Anciently, betrothal was so binding that it took a divorce to separate it:

Matthew 1:18-19 Now the birth of Yahushua Messiah was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to **put her away** secretly.

Notice that Joseph was called "a just man" yet was minded to divorce his wife during this betrothal period because of what others might perceive as unfaithfulness. This demonstrates the binding nature of a betrothal. For this reason, some believe this is an example of a legitimate divorce in Yahweh's eyes. I would have to agree that it is a legitimate divorce

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since Joseph is indeed called "**a just man**" and this scenario does not violate Yahushua's statement that "what Elohim has joined together (*as one flesh*), let not man separate". They are not yet "one flesh", so no separation of "one flesh" is taking place. For this reason, some assume the "divorce" Yahushua was speaking of in Matthew 19:9 must be speaking of divorces which occur prior to the time the couple comes together physically to become 'one flesh'.

However, is this really what Yahushua was talking about when he mentions the exception? Let's try to put this exception into the text and see what we come up with. Please give careful attention to this and please keep in mind that the basis for their belief is that we should not separate what "Elohim has joined together" as "one flesh".

Matthew 19:9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, (...except for porneia), and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Since those who hold this view are limiting the 'porneia' to the betrothal period, when Yahushua says, "**whoever divorces his wife**" He would have to be talking about a betrothed wife rather than a wife that you had become "one flesh" with. This being the case, the entire statement must be read as a statement which only applies to the betrothal period. Therefore, Yahushua would be saying "**whoever divorces his betrothed wife, except for "porneia", and marries another, commits adultery.**" In other words, if a man betrothed himself to a wife and he broke off the betrothal for any reason other than "porneia", both he and his betrothed would be committing adultery if they ever married anyone else! But how could this be the case since he was never 'one flesh' with her to begin with? If he divorced her for reasons other than 'porneia' before he became 'one flesh' with her, and she married someone else and became 'one flesh' with them, how is that a violation of Yahushua's statement "What Elohim has joined together (*as one flesh*), let no man separate?" It doesn't really make any sense.

So, I find it hard to believe that Yahushua was talking about the betrothal period alone when He said "except it be for porneia/zenuth". He was not talking about divorces which occur during the betrothal period because the context of the Pharisees' question was marriages that had already been consummated. A person can remarry after divorcing their betrothed spouse for ANY REASON, not just porneia. There is no logical reason otherwise because they never became "one flesh." A marriage isn't "one flesh" until it is consummated through intercourse. It makes no sense to allow divorces only during the betrothal period for reasons of "porneia" and then condemn remarriages as adultery. That would not be a separation of a "one flesh" marriage. Those who hold this view believe that Yahushua could only be speaking of divorces which occur during the betrothal period because they say that is the only kind of divorce which would not violate Yahushua's statement "What Elohim has joined together (*as one flesh*), let not man separate." But this theory does not make any sense because someone could divorce his betrothed for any reason and still not separate a 'one flesh' relationship.

So, what actually constitutes a marriage? Let's examine:

Malachi 2:13-14 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. 14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because Yahweh has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks elohimly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 16 "For Yahweh Elohim of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says Yahweh of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

Notice that it says she is "your wife by covenant." When a man and woman of Yahweh decide that they want to get married, they are considered to be husband and wife whenever they make their covenant with one another to be husband and wife. Consider the example of Isaac and Rebekah:

Genesis 24:67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So, Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

In the above case, Abraham and Yahweh chose a wife for Isaac and this is obviously something that Isaac had agreed to as well. Rebekah had already agreed to it and showed her agreement by coming with Abraham's servant. All that was

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needed was an agreement to be husband and wife, which was then consummated when they became one flesh. No ceremony was needed and no formal wedding. Only an agreement (covenant) to be husband and wife is needed, which is then sealed when they become one flesh.

Today, the marriage covenant with its commitments are made at the wedding, and this is when they are pronounced "husband and wife." The marriage is then sealed when they become "one flesh". In Yahweh's eyes, it requires no involvement from any governmental entity. The marriage is not a covenant between a man, woman, and some government. Rather, it is a covenant between a man and woman with Elohim joining them together as one flesh. If a couple has intercourse before the covenant is made, it would be considered a sin (fornication) until they made the covenant/agreement at the wedding. A good test for whether two people are really married is to ask them, "Do you call her your wife?" and "Do you call him your husband?". This usually answers the question.

Physical Adultery

The other view which is quite popular today is the belief that Yahushua was speaking of adultery when making the exception which allows for divorce and remarriage. In today's adulterous generation, it should be no surprise that this is popular. However, if we closely examine what Yahushua is saying we'll find that in actual application it either results in moral debauchery in the assembly, or in Yahushua contradicting Himself. Let me explain with a scenario that will illustrate this, but first lets quote the passage for reference, this time inserting the exception of adultery into the text:

Matthew 19:9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for [adultery], and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Matthew 5:32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except [adultery] causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

With these scriptures in mind, please pay close and careful attention to the following scenario. This scenario assumes adultery alone is legitimate grounds for divorce and remarriage:

Suppose two believers were married, and the man decided to divorce his wife and marry another woman just because he found a prettier woman than she. This alone would not be legitimate grounds for divorce since no adultery was committed by the wife. Therefore, Yahweh would not honor the divorce on the part of the man and would consider his new marriage to be an adulterous marriage. The entire reason the new marriage is an adulterous marriage is because Yahweh did not honor the divorce with his first wife. He is still "one flesh" with the original wife. Now because Yahweh did not honor the divorce and they are still considered "one flesh", this also would prevent the woman from being able to remarry. For this reason Yahushua says, "**whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.**" Now if Yahushua's exception for divorce and remarriage was really adultery, then it seems to me He would be contradicting Himself. Why? Because if the man is over there committing adultery in this second marriage, why couldn't she marry anyone else? Isn't he committing adultery? And in fact, since the man is committing adultery, why wouldn't that cancel his first marriage and enable him to continue in that remarriage to the prettier woman? You can't have it as adultery for the one and not adultery for the other. Either the marriage is no longer "one flesh" or it is still "one flesh". Either Yahweh honors the divorce, or He doesn't.

When presenting this scenario to those who accept adultery as legitimate grounds for divorce, I was met with a potential solution to this problem. It was suggested that when a man divorced his wife for the reason mentioned above, in his new marriage he did indeed commit adultery the FIRST TIME he went to bed with his new 'wife'. But because he committed adultery, Yahweh honored the divorce he made with his first wife and he could continue having physical relations with his new wife without committing adultery. Then his first wife (whom he divorced) could also find a new husband since he committed adultery that one time.

But with this rather bizarre interpretation, anyone could divorce and remarry FOR ANY REASON and the adultery they committed with their new wife cancelled the previous marriage, and their adultery is no longer adultery. How can having physical relations with a woman be adultery the first time, but not adultery each time after that? Is this really what Yahushua meant? What would prevent people from just swapping wives? For instance, suppose brother Sam and sister Sue get divorced for any old reason, then brother Jack and sister Jane get divorced for any old reason. Sam could marry Jack's wife, then Jack would be free to marry Sam's wife! Since Sam and Jane's adultery against their spouses frees

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them to remain married, their former spouses could marry one another without committing adultery at all! Sure, that first act would be adultery, but that's easy to repent of... just repent for that one act of adultery and continue the relationship! Surely wife swapping in the body of Messiah is a more severe sin than that one act of adultery between Sam and Jane!

Obviously, this would be moral debauchery in the assembly that results in very confused and very very hurt children in the assembly. How could we explain to Jack's children that "sister Sue" is their new mommy and their real mommy ("Sister Jane"), seated 2 rows back, is married to "sister Sue's" old husband, "brother Sam?" This kind of wicked moral standard would be a horrible witness to our children, not to mention the community. Sadly, such is the case in some churches and congregations today! And to think that such marriages could ever in a million years be considered by Yahweh to be "honorable among all" and the bed "undefiled?" Could Yahweh ever really honor such marriages?

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers Elohim will judge.

But wife swapping would be authorized by Yahushua Himself if you understand adultery alone to be one of the 'physical porneia' exceptions. It just doesn't make any sense. How would such a moral standard be much different than what the heathen do? The marriage bed is to be undefiled by fornication and adultery. Even in the Torah, a woman who remarried after a divorce was called "defiled":

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, 2 "when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 "if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4 "then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before Yahweh, and you shall not bring sin on the land which Yahweh your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.

He cannot remarry her after "she has been defiled." In scripture, the act of adultery itself is considered to be a defiling act:

Numbers 5:12-14 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, 13 'and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught -- 14 'if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself --

So, this may very well be why Yahushua said whoever divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery:

Matthew 5:32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

So, what actually should be done if adultery is committed?

Adultery in the assembly

If adultery is ever committed by an unbeliever, Paul said Yahushua never commanded a believer to remain married to an unbeliever. Marriages between believers and unbelievers are forbidden in the Torah and are not part of Yahweh's plan from the beginning. Therefore, if an unbelieving spouse chooses to commit adultery, it is not a sin to divorce them. In fact, it is not a sin to divorce them for any reason if they are truly an unbeliever.

This being the case, the only time adultery even becomes an issue is when adultery is committed by a believer who is married to another believer. Of course, adultery is never supposed to be a problem in marriages between two believers. If it is a problem, this is not a good sign that the offender is truly a believer. The offender certainly can be a believer (for even King David fell in this sin), but it is not supposed to be a problem among us.

However, in today's sex charged and horribly immoral society where the world's largest collection of pornography is only

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a few clicks away on the internet, there will sometimes be cases when even a believer can get caught up in the sin of adultery. King David's sin began with his eyes. In this wicked and adulterous generation, satan has no shortage of willing servants to tempt men with their eyes. For while men do sin, it is satan and those who imitate satan that tempt men to actually want to do the sin. This is why believers should be wearing modest clothing that draws no attention at all to the parts of our body which are only intended for our spouse to see. We surely don't want to be imitating satan by being a source of temptation for anyone! Those that offend are called tares among the wheat:

Matthew 13:40-42 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire so it will be at the end of this age. 41 "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

On the internet, believers need to be on guard continually and I encourage everyone to be accountable to one another in this area. Women who spend a lot of time on the internet are also vulnerable to getting involved in relationships with men other than their husband. This ultimately leads to adultery. Many marriages have fallen because of this very snare. Computer screens should be in an active room and in full view of anyone in the house. Husbands and wives should have no problem being accountable for any time spent away from their families.

So, if a believer commits adultery against their believing spouse, what should be done? I find it interesting that in the chapter just before Matthew 19 where divorce is forbidden between believers, Yahushua talks about the danger of offending little children, the need for us to become like little children to enter the kingdom of Yahweh, and how we ought to be willing to even pluck out our eyes and cut off our hand or foot if those members of our body cause us to sin. Let's read:

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Yahushua, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 Then Yahushua called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. 6 " But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 8 "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the everlasting fire. 9 "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. 10 " Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

Yahushua warns us of the danger of offending the humble little ones that believe in Him. Children born to parents who believe in Yahweh should be just that. Indeed, we all should be as humble little children. If a parent who believes in Yahweh commits adultery or divorces their spouse, it is obviously a major stumbling block to the children. Yahushua warned us about causing them to sin and the dangers of being a stumbling block to them.

When King David committed adultery, his children also stumbled. His firstborn Amnon fell into sexual sin by committing incest with his sister (2 Samuel 13). David's third son Absalom committed adultery and incest by lying with David's concubines (2 Samuel 16:22). And we all know that Solomon had a problem with women that ultimately resulted in him committing idolatry as well. The bad example David set in his own household affected everyone, but especially his sons. It is these kinds of dangers that Yahushua is warning us about. In fact, Yahushua made the same statements about plucking out your eye and your hand if necessary if it causes you to sin when He spoke of adultery in Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:27-32 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 31 " Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of

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divorce.' 32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Can we see the connection? When Yahushua spoke of the dangers of committing adultery in our hearts, He also gave similar admonition about cutting off our hand or eye if it causes us to sin. He is telling us how very important it is to avoid sin, and adultery in particular. He gives us two ways of how adultery was being committed in that very generation:

- 1) Through ignoring the 10th commandment which forbids lusting after your neighbor's wife.
- 2) Through divorce and remarriage.

Since Yahushua was talking about plucking out your eye and cutting off your hand to avoid adultery in Matthew 5, it would make sense that adultery was also in mind when making those statements in Matthew 18. This time He speaks of the dangers of offending the little ones. We see how it affected David's little ones.

Continuing in Matthew 18:

11 "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. 12 "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? 13 "And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

We ought to realize the extent of which Yahweh went to save us. In this illustration Yahushua is demonstrating the great love He has for the "little ones," whether children or children in heart. After all that Yahushua went through to save the little ones, it is very grievous for Him to see any of us cause His little ones (our children, or anyone who have "become as little children") to sin. We are warned, "woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" and "it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" and "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." What a stern warning we have here in Yahushua's words! It is easy to see that Yahushua could have had adultery (and other sins also) in mind when saying these things. He called a child and set him in their midst, He warned us about offending them, and He admonished us to get rid of things which He formerly said cause stumbling into the sin of adultery. He then reminds us of all that He went through to save them. For us to cause them to stumble is a grievous sin indeed!

So, in this context, Yahushua says:

15 " Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the assembly. But if he refuses even to hear the assembly, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Since the first part of Yahushua's words in Matthew 18 alludes to adultery and the danger of causing offense, it makes sense that Yahushua would next address what should be done if one believer sins against another believer. Sadly, the steps Yahushua commanded us to take are often ignored today. Rather, when one person sins against another it is often the case that the "one or two more" will hear it before the offender himself. This is called slander and gossip. If your brother sins against you, you are to "tell him his fault between you and him alone" rather than telling others about it. It is only after you have told him alone, and he would not hear you that anyone else should be involved. If he won't hear that "one or two more", then it should be told to the whole assembly. If he will not hear the assembly either, then he should be to us "like a heathen".

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So, should this also be followed if a believer commits adultery against their spouse? Yahushua did not make any exceptions to this commandment. In fact, Matthew 18 alludes to adultery being one of the sins and Matthew 19 discusses the marital relationship as well. I don't think it is merely a coincidence that sin in the assembly is discussed in this context. Isn't context one of the most important factors when seeking to understand scripture? Certainly. So, if a believer commits adultery against their spouse, the clear instruction of Yahushua Himself is to do the following:

- 1) "Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."
- 2) "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."
- 3) "If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

A heathen is an unbeliever. If a believer refuses to repent for such a serious sin as adultery against their spouse, it is the ultimate evidence that they are not a believer at all. In the body of Messiah, Yahushua Himself marks the line of division between believer and unbeliever to be those who have repented versus those who have not repented. Repentance is the very first step an unbeliever should take if they want to be a believer.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yahushua Messiah for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A believer will have a willingness to hear the word and repent for such a heinous act, and not have a hardened heart! So, if a believer refused to repent for committing adultery against their spouse, they have left the faith and are no longer to be considered a believer. At that point, you have a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. Let's remember again what Yahweh considers these marriages to be:

- **Malachi 2:11** - "An abomination" which ends up "profaning Yahweh's holy institution which He loves".
- **Nehemiah 13:27** - A "great evil, transgressing against our Elohim."
- **Ezra 9:2** - A "trespass" which results in mixing the "holy seed" (of Elohim) with the wicked.
- **Ezra 9:10,14** - "Forsaking the commandments" and "break(ing) Yahweh's commandments."
- **Joshua 23:11-13** - "Snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes"

The one who committed this heinous crime of adultery has committed a serious crime against their spouse and also their children. To refuse to repent of such a deed is a decision to forsake Yahweh and follow after the idols of this world. To remain in fellowship with such a person would be a failure on the part of the assembly to "put away from yourselves the evil person.". Consider:

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner -- not even to eat with such a person. 12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside Elohim judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

If we aren't even to eat with such persons, why would it be okay to remain married to them? The Torah principle applied here is "put away from yourselves the evil person." These are the words used to describe what ancient Israel was accomplishing when they put a wicked person to death.

Deuteronomy 22:22 If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die -- the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

We may not be able to stone the wicked in our generation, but we can regard them as the walking dead in our eyes. This kind of shunning for unrepentant adulterous behavior is a statement to the world that we do not condone such things.

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Today, there is too little accountability when these sins are committed. Sometimes a person will commit adultery against their spouse, run off with this other person and attend an assembly in some other place. Steps should be taken so that their adultery and refusal to repent is known in every place they go. We should never tolerate such wickedness.

The instructions Yahushua gave for dealing with sin between believers can apply in other areas as well. If a husband who professes to be a believer refuses to repent for getting drunk every night and abusing his wife or his children, these steps can certainly be taken if necessary. However, we do need to also remember that Yahushua's instructions in Matthew 18 were not intended to be used as a tool for a wife to gain authority over her husband by running off and telling others all the ways she disagrees with her husband's decisions---thus using them to gain authority in the relationship. In fact, scripture also instructs a wife how to win over a husband who is not obeying the word.

1 Peter 3:1-2 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

So, there must be a proper balance of a wife being in submission to her husband, giving him the freedom to lead his family in the ways of Yahweh and dealing with a heinous sin such as refusing to repent for committing adultery. In many situations, a husband doing these kinds of things would leave his wife anyway and then his sin would be clearly revealed. But if the wife were to have a husband committing such a sin, she might need to meekly and somberly tell another person about it so that it can be dealt with. Of course, the goal should never be to find ways to get out of the marriage, but rather the goal should be to do all that is in our power to compel the person to repent. Each situation is different and should be handled according to Yahweh's leading, with meekness and fear:

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Jude 1:22 And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

If indeed all has been done to try and bring a person to repentance, and all efforts have been made to restore such a one into fellowship with Yahweh's people and he still resists, refuses to repent, and blasphemes the Way. And if such a matter is taken carefully and prayerfully, and all efforts to restore him have failed in spite of all attempts to restore him, she need not remain in a marriage which Yahweh calls a snare and a trap. The purpose and goal of these steps in Matthew 18 is to bring the person to repentance and cleanse the assembly of the wicked and their corrupting influences.

But if a spouse committed adultery and repented of their sin, forgiveness should be offered as Yahushua says next in Matthew 18:

Matthew 18:21-25 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Master, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Yahushua said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 "But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 "The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 "Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 "So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 "And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 "So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 "Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 'Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 "And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

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We all need to keep in mind the abundant mercy that our Heavenly Father has had on us and all of the wickedness for which we have been forgiven. Notice that the King forgave his servant of a debt of 10,000 talents, but that servant who was forgiven refused to forgive the debt owed to him of only 100 denarii. The point Yahushua is making is that we should always forgive our brother when he repents. There isn't any sin our brother could commit against us that would exceed our own debt to Yahweh. Yahushua didn't say, "go ahead and bear a grudge if your brother committed the sin of _____." In light of the context here in Matthew 18 with adultery being alluded to, the effect on the children, etc it becomes evident that adultery is not to be accepted. In spite of how difficult it might be, if the spouse does repent, it should be forgiven.

In light of these principles, the question of whether adultery is grounds for divorce becomes very clear. If the adultery was committed and the spouse refused to repent even after being confronted by the assembly, yes it is grounds for divorce. In that case, the person basically forsook the faith of Yahweh and has chosen to live the unrepentant life. He can act righteous all he wants, but such a person is in a very dangerous situation:

2 Peter 2:20-22 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Master and Savior Yahushua Messiah, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." Revelation 22:15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Ezekiel 18:24 " But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

Mark 9:42 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

May Yahweh keep all of us pure and upright in this wicked and adulterous generation. Let's not return to the vomit but let's embrace the standard set forth in Yahweh's word---a holy and righteous standard that requires us to be faithful in our marriages and fully accountable if we are not.

Legitimate "physical porneia" exceptions

Now that we have established how sin should be handled within the body of Messiah, let's turn our attention to the kinds of "physical porneia" exceptions that are always legitimate grounds for divorce. It is also important to remember that when Yahushua said "except it be for porneia/zenuth" in Matthew 19:9, Yahushua was speaking in the context of a literal marriage between a man and a woman. For this reason, even though it is clear that Yahushua was speaking of a spiritual porneia/idolatry, there must also be instances of physical 'porneia' which are always legitimate reasons for divorce. And indeed, there are. They are as follows:

1 - Incestuous marriages

One example of this was in the Corinthian assembly. A man was married to his own father's wife, and it was called "porneia":

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.

If a person were involved in an incestuous marriage such as the above example, he could divorce her and marry another because the marriage was never honored by Yahweh. The two aren't involved in a marriage that "Elohim has joined together" because, like marriages between believers and unbelievers, it is a marriage that is condemned by Yahweh. Here is another example:

Mark 6:17-18 For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. 18 For John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have

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your brother's wife."

So, these kinds of marriages are clearly wrong and forbidden in the Torah. These marriages are considered to be "porneia". Divorce would certainly be permitted and even demanded in these cases.

2 - Specific Marriages forbidden in the Torah

There are other kinds of marriages which Yahweh forbids but aren't necessarily incestuous. One is a man marrying a woman and her daughter or granddaughter:

Leviticus 18:17 You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness. They are near of kin to her. It is wickedness.

Another example is a man marrying a woman and her sister:

Leviticus 18:18 'Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive.

Of course, today's homosexual marriages weren't an issue at that time but that would obviously be another example of a marriage Yahweh would not join together as legitimate.

3 - Marriages which are classified as adulterous marriages

An example of this is when King David was betrothed (considered a marriage) to Michal (King Saul's daughter) and even paid the bride price for her. But Saul defrauded David and gave her to another man:

2 Samuel 3:14-15 So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." 15 And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

Because she was already betrothed to David and David never divorced her, the marriage between Michal and Paltiel was an adulterous marriage. So, David could take her back and Paltiel could marry another wife. Their relationship was one that Yahweh forbade in the scriptures:

Deuteronomy 22:23-24 If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24 "then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

Michal and Paltiel were apparently spared this punishment because Saul was King and fraudulently commanded the marriage.

Other adulterous marriages would be a brother divorcing his believing wife and marrying another, as Yahushua mentions a number of times. However, such a divorce would be a quite visible sin against his wife that would typically be handled in Matt 18 proceedings before he really had the chance to marry another one.

So, these are the cases where divorce would certainly be permitted and a person is free to marry someone else. There is one common thread to all the cases where divorce and remarriage are permitted. None of them violate Yahushua's command "What Elohim has joined together, let no man separate" and none of them are contrary to the full context of Matthew 18 and 19. There is to be no divorce in any marriage which fulfills the purpose Yahweh ordained in Genesis: a man and woman coming together as "one flesh" to "be fruitful and multiply" a seed of Elohim. If a marriage is in violation to the will of Elohim, it is not a marriage that "Elohim has joined together". Just as an adulterous marriage is not valid in Yahweh's sight and an incestuous marriage is not valid in Yahweh's sight, neither is a marriage between a believer & a rebel who hates Yahweh. Elohim wants no part of any of those marriages. He hates the mixing of righteousness and wickedness. Only forbidden marriages are subject to divorce. It is no coincidence that every one of the exceptions I have mentioned have this in common.

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Polygamy

In this section we will be examining Polygamy as practiced in scripture, a marriage where one man is married to two or more women. Since this is not forbidden anywhere in the Torah, the Messianic promises were made to a polygamist (King David) who was called a man after Yahweh's own heart, and indeed even the House of Israel was built on a polygamous family (Jacob), it is worthwhile to examine this topic in light of Yahushua's statements. It seems that Yahushua's statements would have some bearing on whether polygamy is something Yahweh permits. Consider:

Matthew 19:9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for "porneia", and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Matthew 5:32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except 'porneia' causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Mark 10:11-12 So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 "And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Yahushua's statements certainly do have a bearing on polygamist marriages. At first glance it might even appear that Yahushua is condemning polygamy outright. The reason divorce and remarriage is considered to be adultery against the first wife is based on the fact that Yahweh is still honoring the first marriage. But since it is not a sin for a man to have more than one wife, why would a man who divorces his first wife and marries another be committing adultery against her? Indeed, if Yahweh didn't honor the divorce and considers the marriage with his first wife to still be a marriage, why is it adultery and not just "polygamy?" Considering the weightiness of what Yahushua is saying here, this is a very important question. It is a very serious thing to be in a marriage that Yahweh calls, "Adultery!"

Let's examine a scripture in the Torah that will help to shed light on this question.

Leviticus 18:18 'Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive.

This scripture is speaking of the sin of taking two sisters in marriage. This scripture is not condemning a man from taking two spiritual sisters in marriage, it is forbidding a man from taking two blood related sisters in marriage. Why is Yahweh forbidding marriage between two blood sisters? Notice that Yahweh says you shall not take a woman "as a rival" to her sister. The word translated "rival" ([#6887 "tsarar"](#)) means "affliction" or "distress" by "binding together." In light of the fact that two blood sisters married to the same man are more apt to have jealousies and strife between one another, this precept helped to prevent the holy institution of marriage from being used as something that creates affliction, distress, or dissension rather than peace, love and unity. The Torah principle of "love one another" is being invoked here. Sowing discord is something that Yahweh clearly hates and considers to be an abomination:

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things Yahweh hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

Strife and discord are a work of the flesh, not a fruit of the Spirit. Those who sow discord between two believers are practicing something Yahweh "hates" and considers to be "an abomination." This kind of discord is quite evident when we recall the jealousies and fighting that took place between Leah and Rachel. But in the case of Jacob marrying Leah and Rachel (two sisters), we should remember that Jacob was defrauded by Laban. Probably out of mercy for Leah (a woman he didn't want to marry) and to avoid strife between him and Laban, he went along with it. I don't believe Jacob violated the Torah principle because he did not take Rachel "as a rival to her sister" Leah, he was tricked into it by Rachel's father, Laban.

Yahweh knows the potential for rivalry and strife will create a very unhappy home for children of Yahweh, thereby hindering them from being the seed of Elohim that Yahweh desires. The Hebrew word translated "rival" in Leviticus 18:18 is also used here:

1 Samuel 1:4-8 And whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give portions to Peninnah

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his wife and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although Yahweh had closed her womb. 6 And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because Yahweh had closed her womb. 7 So it was, year by year, when she went up to the house of Yahweh, that she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat. 8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Nothing her husband said or did could comfort Hannah from the oppression she felt from her "rival." There is no indication they were even blood sisters but the sadness in such a home can be just as great. When Jacob and his family fled from Laban, Laban caught back up with Jacob and said:

Genesis 31:50 "If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us -- see, Elohim is witness between you and me!"

So even Laban recognized that polygamy can cause problems between two unrelated women. He considered any decision by Jacob to add another wife to his family to be an affliction to his daughters. In fact, there are no examples in scripture of any righteous man marrying a second wife against the will of his first wife. So important was this, that Abraham was ready to give his inheritance to Eliezer of Damascus rather than marry a second wife:

Genesis 15:2-3 But Abram said, "Master Yahweh, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

Remember, the name "Abram" means "Father of many." When Sarah was barren, why didn't Abraham just pick up a second wife rather than walk around in shame with a name like "Father of many" and force himself to give his inheritance to Eliezer of Damascus? It was not until Sarah wanted to give Abraham her handmaid that Abraham did anything. We know that even though Sarah permitted it, there was strife in the household anyway. Now imagine if he took a second wife against Sarah's will. The rivalry would have been even greater and Abraham would have been afflicting Sarah.

Now remember that Leviticus 18:18 forbids a man from taking a woman as a rival to her sister. The spirit behind what is spoken is to avoid afflicting your wife and creating strife in the household between two people who should be loving one another. So, whether a person takes a woman "as a rival" to her blood sister or he takes a woman against the will of his first wife, it really is no different. Such a man is not loving his first wife, he is afflicting her. He is laying down a stumbling block before her feet that will sow discord between two sisters in Yahweh who should be loving one another. Sowing discord is something "**Yahweh hates**" and it is "**an abomination to Him**." Those who create temptation for others and cause believers to stumble are called "tares" among the wheat:

Matthew 13:40-42 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The word translated "offend" is [#4625 skandalon](#) which means to lay a snare or give occasion for another person to fall. This same word was used when Yahushua rebuked Kepha/Peter for tempting him to sin:

Matthew 16:21-23 From that time Yahushua began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. 22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Master; this shall not happen to You!" 23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an **offense** to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of Elohim, but the things of men."

Yahushua called Kepha "satan" for even unknowingly trying to cause him to stumble. Satan was using Kepha to subtly tempt Yahushua to think He was too great to have to go through these things. Satan is the one that wants to stir up trouble and create temptation for believers in Yahweh. A man taking on a second wife against his first wife's will is not only creating temptation and strife between sisters in Yahweh, it is afflicting his wife, the very one he is supposed to be loving as Yahushua loved the assembly!

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1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

A husband is supposed to be loving and guiding his wife to righteousness. Marrying a second wife against her will is not loving her but afflicting her and guiding her to unrighteousness. He is also sowing discord between her and another sister in Yahweh. With this in mind, it should be no surprise why Yahushua said divorce and remarriage for unrighteous reasons is not "polygamy"---it is "Adultery!"

Matthew 5:32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except 'porneia' **causes her to commit adultery**; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

So strong is Yahweh against this, that He actually blames the husband for causing his wife to commit adultery when she remarries! All through scripture, Yahweh hated it when a person caused affliction to the disadvantaged.

Consider:

Exodus 22:22-24 You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. 23 "If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 "and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

All throughout scripture, Yahweh talks again and again about the fatherless and the widow. He hated it when they were afflicted and/or their needs were ignored by Yahweh's people. If a man were to divorce his believing wife and marry another, Yahweh classifies such an affliction to be the sin of adultery. So, Yahweh has a message to all the women of Yahweh around the world who fear that their husband is wanting a second wife: He cares about you!

Righteous Job, a man who had one wife, refused to even consider marrying a second wife to the point of making a covenant with his eyes so that he would not "look upon a young woman" ([Heb. #1330 "Bethulah"](#) meaning "virgin")

Job 31:1-4 I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman? 2 For what is the allotment of Elohim from above, And the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? 3 Is it not destruction for the wicked, And disaster for the workers of iniquity? 4 Does He not see my ways, And count all my steps?

Why would Job keep his eyes from looking at virgins if he could take a second wife any old time? She must not have wanted that and he knew how serious a matter it was to sin against his wife.

Understanding the importance of this also prevents the loophole of a man thinking he can just marry another woman before divorcing his current wife and he would not be guilty of adultery. It doesn't matter if he marries another and then divorces his first wife, the same situation is present, and it is still adultery. I don't see anyone standing before Yahweh with such a loophole and convincing Him that it was okay. At issue here is 'wife replacement' and afflicting the one you are supposed to be loving as Yahushua loved the assembly. If a man divorces his wife and she marries another man, her first husband is the one causing her to commit adultery (Mat 5:32). Of course, this doesn't mean his first wife is guiltless for marrying another man but woe to the one by whom offense comes!

Luke 17:1 Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!

This is even more evidence that divorce is never permitted between believers. What Elohim has joined together, let not man separate.

Now if a man and his wife chose to allow a second wife into the marriage, he would be forbidden from being an attendant (deacon) or overseer/elder (bishop).

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you -- 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of Elohim,

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not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

1 Timothy 3:12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

The fact that Paul mentions this requirement shows that some believers were indeed practicing polygamy. The Greek word (#3391, Mia) translated "one" does mean "one" and it is translated "one" 62 out of 79 instances. The other places where it is not translated "one," the word "one" would certainly fit just as well. For instance, in this verse it is translated "first."

Titus 3:10 A man that is an heretick after the first (#3391 MIA) and second admonition reject

It could be translated "After admonition one and two, reject." Mia does indeed mean "one." The Torah principle behind these verses is where Yahweh did not permit kings to have multiple wives:

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

Yahweh knew well that the power and wealth of a king would increase the potential for excessive polygamy and riches. Polygamy in particular can draw a man's heart away from Yahweh, as well as turn a king's heart away from his responsibilities as king.

1 Corinthians 7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

King Solomon is certainly an example of that. When he did turn away from Yahweh, he led all of Israel away also. We don't need any chances of that occurring in the assembly. Therefore, it isn't hard to see why leaders in the assembly should be the husband of one wife.

As far as polygamy being practiced today, we should remember that in many countries (like the United States) it is against the law. For this reason, we should consider:

1 Peter 2:13-17 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Master's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of Elohim, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men -- 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of Elohim. 17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear Elohim. Honor the king.

Any commandment of man which does not violate a commandment of Yahweh should be followed for the sake of putting to silence those who would accuse us and attempt to cast us in a bad light. Choosing to have only one wife does not violate any command in the Torah. And I can assure you, a man walking around with several wives will affect his witness in a negative way! We should not do things which cause stumbling for others, even if they are permissible. Even Yahushua paid the temple tax when He didn't have to, just so that they would not be offended.

Also, most marriages today include a covenant between a man and woman which contain words like "keep thee only unto her for as long as you both shall live." If your marriage covenant included such words, you would not be able to marry a second wife and keep your covenant at the same time. Yahweh is a covenant keeper and we need to be also.

Also, if we consider Yahushua's admonition to get back to the way it was in the beginning, it wouldn't be too difficult to see why many interpret them as outright forbidding polygamy. Yahushua wants us to get back to the way things were when there was one man, one woman producing a seed of Elohim. We should remember that there is about a 50/50 chance of a child being born a boy or a girl. For this reason, there is usually an equal number of men and women in society. In the United States, 49.12% of the population is male and 50.88% of the population is female (2002 data). If we lived in a society where there were significantly more women than men, I could see some legitimacy for a man having

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more than one wife rather than multitudes of women being sentenced to a life of celibacy. This was often the case in ancient times because of so many men dying in various wars. But if we live in a society where the number of men are nearly the same as the number of women, a man marrying more than one wife could potentially prevent another man from producing a seed of Elohim. It seems that these things should be taken into consideration as well.

I do realize that Yahushua was not outright condemning polygamy in Matthew 19 and related verses, so I would stop short of calling it a sin either way. But it is evident by His statements that unless a man understands the difference between adultery and polygamy, he could find himself in a "marriage" that he considers to be polygamous---but actually is adulterous in Yahweh's eyes. His statements and the examples seen in scripture demonstrate the importance of a man not afflicting his first wife by taking on a second wife against her will. We are called to love our wives, not give them occasion for stumbling or to afflict them.

How to win an unbelieving spouse

Before we discuss this in particular, it is important that we understand who a believer really is and who an unbeliever really is. Of course, if your spouse already professes to be an unbeliever then it isn't a difficult matter to discern. But if they claim to be a believer, we need to have some clarity and discernment in this area. Today, many people are very quick to judge others as "unbelievers" and "apostates". A danger exists when one spouse accuses another spouse of being an unbeliever, looking for a way out of the marriage. People like to say, "I don't think a believer would (insert sin here), do you?". There is a huge danger in making these declarations. We have to somberly remember that we will be judged by how we judge others.

Matthew 7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

If we are quick to accuse one who professes to be a believer as being an unbeliever solely because of some sin we perceive the other person has committed, we can potentially judge ourselves out of the kingdom! For instance, suppose a person thought the only real believers in this world are those that keep the feast days. The reality is, there are sincere people whom Yahweh considers to be believers, but this has not yet been revealed to them. Do they become believers on the day they keep their first feast? No, we all become believers when we repent and believe in Yahushua the Messiah. All believers have repented, but not all believers are at the same level of spiritual conviction. Suppose that you judge a person to be an unbeliever because they continually struggle with the same sin, repenting and then committing it again. You had better be sure that you don't have and never will have the same problem with any sin in your own life! With what judgment you judge, you will be judged.

The truth is, Yahweh will lead all believers to His wonderful truths, but we aren't all there yet! If I condemn another person because they don't observe the Sabbath day, what if Yahweh does plan to reveal this to them at some point but He is working on another area of their life at that time which He feels is more important? If we condemn another person solely because they aren't at the same level of conviction that we are, we just condemned ourselves if we are at any other level than perfect! For suppose on judgment day we learn that we had unknowingly been sinning in other areas? We condemned others for being ignorant or weak, and Yahushua said we will be judged with what judgment we have judged others. This is a very very important thing to remember! So do not be hasty in assuming the other spouse is an unbeliever. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

In the case of a believer forsaking the faith and becoming an unbeliever, Yahushua declared that this is not to be a decision made by any one person. Neither it is not a decision to be made by just a few people in the assembly. A multitude of believers must together decide that. One must go through each of these steps before a person is considered to be an unbeliever. This is Yahushua's commandment, and we must follow it.

If your husband or wife is an unbeliever who is willing to live with you, there is an awesome opportunity to win them to the faith of Yahushua. How is this accomplished? You can be assured that you are least likely to bring them to Messiah if you have a "holier than thou" attitude and try to force Yahushua into their lives. To win them, one must use wisdom:

Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to

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righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

We must understand that an unbeliever isn't going to have the Spirit of Yahweh within them to give them strength to do what is right. But we do! The way to win your husband or wife to Messiah is by fulfilling your role as a loving husband or submissive wife. A believer cannot blame an unbelieving spouse for any failure to fulfill Yahweh's command to love their wife or submit to their husband. We cannot overcome evil by practicing evil ourselves. We must overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

This requires us to walk in the Spirit of Yahweh in spite of how we are treated.

1 Peter 3:8-9 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Remember the beatings and spittings of the enemy that Yahushua endured for our sakes. In His wisdom He recognized that they didn't really know what they were doing.

Luke 23:34 Then Yahushua said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

We need to set the standard of even loving those who do not love us if we want our spouse to see the blessing of walking in His ways.

Galatians 5:19-25 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of Elohim. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Messiah's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Don't expect your wife or husband to change when you are sitting there struggling with the same thing. Set the example of obedience to Yahweh in the home and that will be the best environment for change in your spouse. This principle actually applies to all marriages, whether married to a believer or unbeliever.

Winning a wife to Yahushua

While it is true that Yahweh has set a husband in authority over his wife, the mindset of today's culture is that a woman need not submit to her husband at all. And even if it were not this way, the goal is not for a husband to force his wife to believe (that isn't belief at all!) but to come to faith in Yahushua in a way that is sincere and genuine. Still, as a husband you need to assume leadership in the home. Diligently labor in the word, hungering and thirsting for righteousness and then gently guide the home in the way of love, righteousness, and holiness. She will have a harder time respecting your leadership if you are spiritually lazy. We also need to be careful about how we lead. Yahweh leads us little by little, step by step, molding us into the image of His Son. When He was with His disciples, He said:

John 16:12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

Husbands should lead their wives in a way that they are able to bear. To be "overbearing" is simply "overwhelming". In Acts 15, the apostles recognized that they should not lay upon the Gentiles everything at once, but to give them some necessary commandments to get them started in their walk with Yahweh. Indeed, even in our own walk it is a daily growth that must take place. When you plant a seed, you can yell at that plant all day long, but you cannot make it grow. Yahweh has to do that. Therefore, wisdom must be used in leadership, with prayer and diligent seeking of how Yahweh wants us to lead.

With any wife, the best way to win them is to love them as Yahushua loved the assembly...whether they deserve it or not.

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Too often, a husband excuses himself from having to love his unsubmitive and unbelieving wife because he thinks it is all her fault that he is not loving her. But we must always remember what brought us to Yahushua!

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

We weren't very lovable when we were unbelievers yet look at how Yahushua loved us! This is a very important message for husbands who are married to unbelieving wives: If you want your wife to love Yahushua, **be** Yahushua unto her! If she doesn't want to read the scriptures, you can **be** the scriptures in such a way that few women can resist. At first, she may not treat you in kind, but remember she is not a believer so what do you expect? Don't be bitter or have even a hint of bitterness toward her:

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

You weren't treating Yahushua very well all those years that you didn't believe, were you? If Yahweh had become bitter with us, we wouldn't have Yahushua available to bring us salvation.

Titus 3:3-5 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of Elohim our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Women have excellent memories in how they are treated, whether good or bad. If you are kind and loving to her even while she is hateful to you, you are doing the very thing Yahushua did to win your soul. If she has any conscience at all, she will feel guilty for how she is treating you and she will see the need to love you in return. Then you will also see changes. When she realizes the changes, she sees in you come from your studies of the word, she will be compelled to find out more about this "Yahushua" person or about these new convictions you are learning.

Please remember that you do have to be very patient. The seed that falls on good ground will bear fruit "with patience":

Luke 8:15 "But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience..."

Yahweh waited very patiently for us, and He continues to be patient with us. Should not our patience mirror that of Yahweh's?

Also remember that even though Yahushua is the King of Kings, He was not prideful. He humbly washed the feet of His disciples to demonstrate the need to be kind to one another in service and love. When a man treats his wife with honor even though she isn't deserving, it will compel her to be ashamed and to start walking in that honor. When a man serves his wife with numerous acts of kindness and is a true gentleman to her, it will be harder for her to resist such a love. Of course, such love must come from the heart and not be phony. We must follow the example of Yahushua whether our wives are believers or unbelievers. Nourish her, cherish her, serve her, honor her, be kind to her and just let Yahushua's love for her flow through you. If you don't have it, ask Yahweh to fill you with His love for the lost and confused souls of this world.

I realize that this is a tall order for us men. I wonder how we could ever match Yahushua's love for the assembly, but though I also still fall short of His glory I know that there is no excuse for it. The closer we are to Yahushua's example, the more pleasing we are in Yahweh's sight. When we walk in Yahushua's example, we are providing the best environment to bring positive changes in our wives and also our children. We show our whole family how wonderful Yahushua's love is by our example.

Ephesians 5:25-28 Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the assembly and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious assembly, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

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If it turns out in the end that she totally rejects that and decides to divorce you and go her own way, if you have shown her Yahushua's love you can know that it is not you, she is rejecting... but Yahushua Himself in you.

Winning a husband to Yahushua

If your husband is not a believer, this can be a great challenge because the role of the wife is to submit to her husband. Many assume that they need not submit to their unbelieving husband because he is not interested in obeying Yahweh. As a result, some try to lead their husband to Yahushua by preaching to them or "force feeding" the word into their life. They want so much to see their husband saved that they can't resist talking about it, dropping hints, purposely leaving tracts everywhere in the house and using every possible open door to guide them to Yahushua. But according to scripture, the method a wife should use to bring her husband to Yahushua is just the opposite. It is not through leading him to Messiah, it's through submitting to him and trusting Yahweh to work on his heart through that submissive and chaste behavior.

1 Peter 3:1 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

The truth is a wife need not say anything at all to win her husband. She can, "without a word," win her husband to Yahushua by a righteous and holy manner of life that is "accompanied by fear". Who or what is she to be fearing?

1 Peter 3:3-4 Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel -- 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of Elohim.

We can find a scripture which repeats these principles in Proverbs 31:

Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears Yahweh, she shall be praised.

If a wife does fear Yahweh, her concern is not on the outward adorning but on the hidden person of the heart. If a woman does fear Yahweh, she will very carefully submit to the one that Yahweh has placed in authority over her, trusting Him to work in her husband to lead her in the direction He desires. This is called "precious" in Yahweh's sight. The Strong's Greek lexicon defines it as:

poluteles pol-oo-tel-ace' from 4183 and 5056; extremely expensive:--costly, very precious, of great price.

So, if a woman would want to be extremely valuable, precious and pure in Yahweh's eyes, she should know what to do.

1 Peter 3:5-6 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in Elohim also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him master, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

Notice that it says the holy women adorned themselves with a trust in Elohim by submitting to their husbands. This should be the precious adorning of every woman of Yahweh: meekly, gently, and quietly submitting to the husband in the fear of Yahweh.

Notice it also says that a wife is a "daughter of Sarah" if she does good and is "not afraid with any terror." Afraid of what? The main difficulty a lot of times is in overcoming the fears of what might happen if she trusts in Yahweh to work through her husband. Circumstances may arise which can test her faith in Yahweh even if she is married to a believer. Sarah nearly ended up being another man's wife because of her submission to her husband's decision to tell everyone she was Abraham's sister. She trusted in Yahweh to deliver her, and He did. Sarah is cited as an example to follow. She called her husband "Adon" (Master) and she trusted in Yahweh when her husband made decisions that created unpleasant circumstances. If Yahweh can deliver Sarah, He can deliver her daughters too.

When a wife treats her husband with reverence and respect, he will often rise up to the level to which she is treating him. Supporting him, adoring him, and appreciating him will have a very positive effect---especially if he doesn't deserve it.

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But if a wife treats her husband with disdain, defiance, and disrespect, he will often stoop to that level of how he is being treated. If a wife wants a husband to lead her spiritually, she must step out of the way and cease from trying to lead him to be the leader. She cannot "play Holy Spirit". That is Yahweh's role to convict the husband to walk in His ways. She can truly win him "without a word!"

So, what if an unbelieving husband demands his wife to commit some kind of sin against Yahweh? We see how Yahweh delivered Sarah from having to commit adultery. If a woman is a daughter of Sarah, I see no reason why Yahweh would deny her the same deliverance.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but Elohim is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

In such a situation, you are faced with a decision to obey Yahweh or your husband. The problem is, Yahweh commanded wives to be obedient to their husbands. Yahweh is quite aware of this! I have never seen or heard of a situation where a truly submissive wife which has the gentle and quiet spirit desires to have no way of escape but to disobey her husband. I've heard testimonies of remarkable and sometimes miraculous things Yahweh would do to provide the way which she could either obey Yahweh and her husband, or Yahweh intervened to cause the husband to change his mind.

Now I realize that maybe, somewhere in the world there may very well be some situations where a very wicked unbelieving husband would demand his wife commit some sin against Yahweh, especially if she is struggling in the area of gentleness, quietness, and submission. If she has been in prayer, crying out to Yahweh for deliverance, and she has made a humble appeal to her husband to not have to do the sin, and at the last possible moment she sees there is clearly no way out of having to commit the sin...at that time she may have to tell her husband she simply cannot do it. He is obviously not willing to dwell with her without demanding that you join him in wickedness. To think that she has to remain with such a husband is a perversion of what Paul meant when he said, "if he is willing to live with you."

Remember that Paul said Yahushua never commanded a believer to remain with an unbeliever, but he said it is good to stay together if possible, in case the one spouse is able to bring the other to Yahushua. I agree with this of course, but if a husband is only "willing to live with you" under the conditions that you also sin against Yahweh, this is the very danger that Yahweh warned against when forbidding marriages between believer and unbeliever in the Torah:

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other elohim; so the anger of Yahweh will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

Paul wasn't giving his advice in a way that transgressed the Torah. For even Paul said:

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

Paul was speaking of situations where the spouse is willing to live with you in such a way that they are not a stumbling block. The goal and aim of remaining together is to save their soul:

1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

This is the context in which Paul was speaking. A wife isn't going to save the soul of her husband by joining him in sin, and a husband isn't going to save the soul of his wife if she is continuously, rebelliously rejecting the love of Yahushua to the point of being a stumbling block for his own salvation. The unbeliever and the children aren't sanctified by the believing spouse when the spouse is outright rebellious and wicked, especially if they blaspheme the way of truth. I do believe the impact on the children should be a factor in any decision to leave an unbeliever or remain with them. Everything should be handled with diligent prayer and seeking the will of Yahweh with brothers and sisters who understand Yahweh's will in these matters.

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If all efforts fail

There are cases when a person needs to leave their spouse and even their children for the sake of the kingdom. Consider Yahushua's comforting words:

Matthew 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Yahushua would have never bothered saying this if there weren't times when it is necessary. Consider though the promise! "Everyone" who has had to do this for His name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life. Purposely trying to make this happen is not Yahweh's will, for we should make every effort to bring them to Yahushua. But sometimes it may be necessary to leave everything and just follow Yahushua.

Being single

In this study, we have focused on Yahweh's plan for man and woman. It is evident that marriage and producing a seed of Elohim is the focal point of Yahweh's plan. However, let's remember Yahushua's words:

Matthew 19:9-12 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." 10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: 12 "For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

Please don't think that Yahweh has no use for you simply because you are unmarried. You can still be fruitful for Yahweh's kingdom by making yourself useful in the body of Messiah through ministry to unbelievers and believers alike. Paul was not married but did a great and awesome work for Yahweh and converted many to become children of Elohim who were not children of Elohim. So not everyone necessarily is required to marry and have children. But if Yahweh so leads you, do get married and endeavor to bear children of Elohim. I think Yahushua may have been reassuring us that this is the Father's will also, for in the next few verses we read:

Matthew 19:13-15 Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Yahushua said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." 15 And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.

Let the little children come to Yahushua and do not forbid them. Rather, lead them to Yahushua's arms that they might be blessed. A married person can guide their children to do just that, and an unmarried person can go and convert many to become as children of Elohim. Even unmarried women can be a blessing in the body of Messiah by seeking out ways to serve the brethren and guiding other women to Yahushua. The important thing is that single people avoid becoming self-oriented and remember that our role in life is not to sit around the house and serve ourselves but to be like Yahushua--going out and finding ways to serve others. If you are just taking up the ground and not being useful or fruitful, let not it be said of you:

Luke 13:7-9 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Master, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Part of the blessing of family life is the multitude of opportunities to serve others, whether they be our spouse or our children. But if a single person is focused on Yahweh, they will see the needs out there and respond to them.

Conclusion

I am struck with the similarities between morality standards of the Roman empire in Yahushua's day and the condition of the secular world today. Ancient Rome did not punish adultery, but it became quite common and even fashionable. Abortions were readily available and frequently considered necessary. Whores and pedophiles were rampant. The amphitheaters contained sexual themes with female strippers and live pornography. Like some religious leaders of today,

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the Pharisees attempted to set some kind of moral standard by upholding the importance of marriage and moral chastity, but then degraded the holy institution of marriage itself by permitting divorce between believers.

Yahushua came on the scene and lifted up the holy standard that Yahweh established at the beginning of creation, with man and woman coming together as one flesh to create a holy seed of Elohim. Just as our Master came on the scene of a wicked and adulterous generation and proclaimed to the people of Yahweh the ancient path, the higher plan that Yahweh established at creation, let us also cry out to the people of Yahweh in this wicked and adulterous generation, "Forsake not Yahweh's purposes for your lives. What Elohim has joined together, let no man separate!!" Believers should reject the worldly and self-seeking ways of only remaining married to the one you love and divorcing them when you don't. We must walk in the holy and righteous way of "loving the one you marry" just as scripture commands that we do.

The understanding of the divorce and remarriage set forth in this study brings the whole word of Yahweh together as one counsel for all mankind. It upholds the Torah as Yahweh intended from the very beginning. It upholds the standard that Yahweh set when He forbade marriages to unbelievers. It upholds the scriptures in Nehemiah and Ezra where the men were commanded to divorce their unbelieving wives. It upholds the scriptures in Paul's writings where he allows for the divorcement of unbelievers. It upholds the sanctity of marriages between people who love Yahweh. It upholds the moral integrity of the assembly by casting out the unrepentant but forgiving the repentant. Best of all, it enables Yahweh to fulfill His plan for marriage: One man, one woman, joined together as one flesh to produce a seed of Elohim that will glorify Him. It was because of the children to come that Yahushua didn't put an end to all the wickedness and set up His kingdom a hundred years ago. Aren't we glad that Yahweh waited for us?! And He desires that more children be raised to know Him and walk in His ways. Is it any wonder He gets upset when we are a stumbling block to them? Divorces between believers destroy a child's faith and security in Yahweh. Let's separate ourselves from the ways of this world and walk in the way that Yahweh has ordained for man and woman. Let's seek to walk in love even when our spouse fails us. Let's fulfill Yahweh's plan for our lives, for I know that we are always happiest when we are doing just what we were created to do. Don't let satan divide and conquer. Conquer evil with goodness, righteousness, and virtue. When we do that at home, then Yahweh's people will be one. One body, one faith, one Spirit, one bride, under one Master with one baptism. Do not divide what Yahweh desires to make one.

John 17:20-26 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Will the world believe? Let's live our lives in such a way that all will be drawn to Him. In this is our Father glorified. May our homes be filled with His love so that all will know who His disciples truly are. For only then are we disciples, taught ones that live just as Yahushua lived, fitly joined together as one body in Him. Let it be so among us!

It is high time that we forsake the divorce and division in the body of Messiah and join together---speaking as one voice against sin in the assembly. It is high time that we remember that unforgiveness is nothing more than an unwillingness to give what we have received from Yahweh. It is high time that we let the full counsel of Yahweh on this issue speak to us so that all the confusion can come to an end. It is high time that men turn their hearts to their children and take their role of spiritual leadership in the home. It is high time that women forsake the career-minded goals and start being mothers to their children and submissive wives to their husbands. Then our children will not be caused to stumble. Then our children can be like olive plants around our table, filled with the anointing oil of Yahweh's Spirit and secure in their parents love for them, and for one another.

Psalm 128:1-6 How blessed is everyone who fears Yahweh, Who walks in His ways. 2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. 3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears Yahweh. 5 Yahweh bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 6 Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

May we fear Yahweh enough to remove the stumbling blocks of this age from our presence and from the presence of our children...that our wives may be the fruitful vines which produce the spirit filled children of Yahweh who bring our children's children to the new Jerusalem. Then we will be fulfilling Yahweh's plan. Let's fulfill His plan for our lives. What Elohim joins together, let no man separate! Elohim has joined us all together as one bride unto Yahushua ... let's all remain

together.

Holy Days 2023

Passover – April 6, 2023 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 6-12, 2023

Pentecost – May 26, 2023

Trumpets - September 16, 2023

Atonement – September 25, 2023

Tabernacles –September 30, 2023 to October 6, 2023

Last Great Day – October 7, 2023

Notes