ABERRANT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS: THE POLLUTION OF THE
“ONE FLESH” RELATIONSHIP AS FOUND IN GENESIS 2:24

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ABERRANT RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS: THE POLLUTION OF THE
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To my wife, Linda

You are the faithful companion! You have been a clear example of being my “helper.” I love and thank you! I dedicate this manuscript to you.
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ABSTRACT

Genesis is a book of beginnings. Furthermore, Genesis describes the beginning of the relationship between man and woman. That relationship, as found in Gen 2:24, becomes the standard ideal for the one-flesh union set forth by God. Sadly, Genesis 3 tells of the beginning of sin, and how sin damaged the ideal union. And, although sin has persisted and flourished, the standard of Gen 2:24 never changed, nor was it replaced.

Thus, the following dissertation seeks to locate, examine, and discuss the various one-flesh, man-woman relationships in Genesis. The first chapter of this research examines the one-flesh relationship found in Gen 2:24. Then the primary focus looks upon the various passages that expose aberrant or polluted unions between men and women as they refused to follow the ideal paradigm. This study first looks at polygamous unions – Gen 4:19–24; 16:1–16; 26:34–35; 28:6–9; 29:15–30; 29:31–30:24; 34:1–31; 35:22, and 38:2. Then it examines relationships built upon lust and the personal gain that can be obtained from lust – Gen 6:1–3; 9:18–25; 12:10–20; 19:1–11; 20:1–18; 26:6–11; 38:11–30; and 39:7–20. Additionally, another section studies unions characterized by depraved sexual aberrance – 19:30–38 and 38:6–10. Lastly, there are two passages found in Genesis, chapter 24 and Gen 41:45, that appear to uphold the ideal standard set forth in Gen 2:24. Those two passages are covered in the last chapter of this paper. The last part of this paper summarizes that not only does Gen 2:24 remain the standard for the union between man and woman in Genesis, it became the regulatory idea behind passages in the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, and the New Testament that address godly relationships.
Introduction

Gen 2:24 is God’s ideal paradigm for the union between man and woman. It is explained as a one-flesh relationship between the man and the woman. But, this narrative defining the union between man and woman, is only a portion of what is revealed in the book of Genesis concerning the man/woman relationship. The aim of this paper is to do an exegetical examination of select passages from Genesis so as to understand the ideal union found in Gen 2:24, and also, categorize and discuss the various deviations from that ideal.

Guide for Dissertation

A key component of this study is to find the meaning of Gen 2:24 and the one flesh union. To do this, key words are scrutinized at both the sentence level and word level to compare and contrast the ideal union, as found in Gen 2:24, with other unions found in Genesis. In particular, the author of this research explores the aberrant unions described in Genesis and demonstrates the various ways mankind deviated or polluted God’s design laid out in Gen 2:24.

The first chapter will be used to present Gen 2:24 as the ideal union, between man and woman. The study of this verse examines the key words: “leave,” “cleave,” “one,” and “flesh.” Then a survey of the key phrase “one flesh” is reviewed, along with any textual turning points. This is followed by a summary of the findings concerning Gen 2:24 and the ideal union.

The second chapter presents Gen 4:19–24; Gen 29:15–30; and Gen 26:34–35 as unions displaying polygamy. The key words in this section are: “love,” “bitterness;” key phrases that are examined are “and took for Lamech two wives,” “give me,” “caused her to go to him,” “what have you done to me?,” “bitterness of spirit.” As with chapter 1, the concluding section of this part of the chapter examines these passages in light of research. This chapter, also, offers Gen
16:1–16 as a case of polygamy that took place due to barrenness. The key words studied are: “maid,” “embrace,” and “violence.” The key phrase investigated is: “I shall be built up.” This section concludes with a discussion of research concerning Gen 16:1–16. Chapter two continues the topic of polygamy by considering unions that urge family positioning: Gen 28:6–9; Gen 29:13–30:24; Gen 34:1–31; Gen 35:22; and Gen 38:2. The key words that are examined in this section are: “bless,” “hate,” “to have intercourse,” “to hire,” “bride price,” “folly,” and “concubine.” The key phrase surveyed is “Israel heard it.” In addition, this section provides an analysis of the research within each of the key passages. At the end of this section, a summary is presented of one’s discoveries in light of Gen 2:24.

The third chapter presents Gen 6:1–3; Gen 9:18–25; Gen 19:1–11; Gen 38:11–30; and Gen 39:7–20 as unions dictated by lust. The key words for this chapter are “multiply,” “curse,” “know,” “widow,” “be a harlot,” “temple prostitute,” and “enter.” The key phrases that are examined are “sons of God,” “Ham saw the nakedness of his father,” “that we may know them,” “what will you give me,” and “lie with me.” Further, this research examines the textual turning points for Gen 9:18–25. Last, this section explores the research for each of these passages. Moreover, this chapter has a section that analyzes unions that used the lust of sex because of fear: Gen 12:10–20; Gen 20:1–18; and Gen 26:6–11. The key words are “wife,” “approach,” “touch,” and “guilt.” The key phrases examined are “the woman was taken,” “to preserve from our father’s seed,” “caused me to wander,” “covering of eyes,” and “showing endearment.” The study, also, reflects the textual turning points for Gen 26:6–11. This too is followed by a section on the research that has been done with these passages.
The fourth chapter presents Gen 19:30–38 and Gen 38:6–10 as unions that display sexual aberrance. The key words for this chapter are “know” and “lie with,” and “obligation.” The key phrase surveyed is “he spilled the semen on the ground.” Next, this chapter considers the research completed for these passages.

The fifth chapter presents Gen 41:45 and Genesis 24 as examples of the ideal unions. The key words for this chapter are “Zaphenath-paneah,” “oath” and “take an oath.” The key phrases studied are “Pharaoh gave Asenath in marriage,” and “you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Caananites.” This is followed by a section on the research that has been done for Gen 41:45 and the key verses of Genesis 24.

The conclusion of this paper will be used as a proposal calling for a re-evaluation of how Genesis portrays its understanding of the union between the man and woman. By outlining the ideal one-flesh union in Gen 2:24, and providing numerous aberrant examples, followed by the models from the ideal unions in Gen 41:45 and Genesis 24, the author of Genesis seems to be subtly demonstrating the weakness and inherent problems with deviant one-flesh relationships all the while leading the reader toward stronger one flesh union described in Gen 2:24.
Chapter One

The Basis of the Union Between Man and the Woman

Gen 2:24 is a profound passage of Scripture for the idea of unions within relationships. It states, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (NKJV). It is the first time, within Scripture, that the union between the man and the woman is referenced. Consequently, it seems that an assessment for why it was placed here is viable. But, one has to be vigilant not to make Gen 2:24 state something that it is not proclaiming. Since the original author cannot be questioned about his intentions one has to be attentive to the manner in which Gen 2:24 was arranged. The manner that this can be done is through the consideration of the key words and phrases as they are used within Gen 2:24. What the narrator of Genesis affirmed in 2:24 was to have application beyond its original context. This first union was established for a purpose – so all other unions can shadow it. Thus, this verse can be understood as the description of divine intention. The standard by which other one flesh unions are to be measured.

Genesis 2:24 – Two Becoming One Flesh

Key Words

Gen 2:24 is filled with an abundance of information concerning the union between man and woman. In order to better understand this information, there are some keys words that elaborate on the idea of two becoming one flesh. The first of those words is the word בזח. The word בזח is used approximately two hundred and fourteen times in the Old Testament. Within
these, כָּזִּב is most often used to express the ideas of: “to leave,” “to abandon,” “to depart,”
“loose,” or “to forsake.”¹

An element of כָּזִּב is “to leave” or “to depart” from a nonliving object. Gerstenberger
states, “The basic meaning is ‘leave.’ A person or a being conceived with personal characteristics
removes itself from an object, dissolving thereby its connections with that object.”² Some
examples of this concept: Potiphar “left” all that he had for Joseph to manage (Gen 39:6); Joseph
“left” his coat in Potiphar’s wife’s hand (Gen 39:12, 15, 18); Do not completely glean your
pasture; “leave” some for the poor (Lev 19:10; 23:22); Ruth gleaned the harvest “left” in Boaz’s
field (Ruth 2:16); Men of Israel fled from Saul and “left” their cities (1 Sam 31:7); the
Shunammite’s land was restored to her, after she had “left” it (2 Kgs 8:6); Philistines “left” their
idols after being defeated by David (2 Sam 5:21): as a metaphor for distress – the deer “left”
because there was no grass (Jer 14:5).

Another component of כָּזִּב is “to leave” or “to depart” from a living object. Gerstenberger
notes, “With regard to persons, this sort of turning away or separation also generates juridical,
economic, political, and emotional considerations. The solidarity of the small group obligates a
person to ‘being there’ with others, and to mutually help. ‘Abandoning’ a clan member, in

¹ Robert Alden comments that “the root occurs in thirty of the Old Testament books. It is least represented
in the Pentateuch and the Minor Prophets. Of the 214 occurrences of the verb, 203 are in the qal, nine in the niphal,
and two in the pual. Within these patterns most verb are perfect and imperfect with eleven infinitives, thirty
Theology and Exegesis, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 364.

² Gerstenberger continues by writing: “In English, too, ‘leave’ is often enough used transitively, suggesting
that leaving something behind or abandoning it involves less the physical movement away than the establishment of
a completely new condition. Things formerly connected are separated. The person or entity doing the leaving sets
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 586.
extreme cases even an alien or an enemy (Ex 23:5; Lev 19:10), violates the elementary bonds of community and calls life itself into question.”

Some Old Testament examples of this occurrence: Benjamin could not “leave” his father, Jacob, for if he should “leave” Jacob, Jacob would die (Gen 44:22); Elisha tells Elijah that he will not “leave” him (2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6); mother of child will not “leave” Gehazi (2 Kgs 4:30); Moses asked Hobab not to “leave” the Israelites (Num 10:30); David “leaves” ten concubines to fend for themselves (2 Sam 15:16); Ruth told Naomi that she would not “leave” her (Ruth 1:16); Jeremiah states that he might “leave” his people (Jer 9:2). Along these same lines, there are passages that depict God as the subject and Israel as the object (as in a family relationship), where Israel is described as “forsaking” God (1 Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 24:20; Isa 1:4; 49:14; 54:5; Jer 5:7).

Another meaning of the word יָֽרָה is “to leave” or “to depart” from the confines of concepts such as commandments, laws, justice, wisdom, glory, loyalty, compassion, counsel, and guidance.

Some usages of this construct are as follows: Israel “left” all the commandments of the Lord (2 Kgs 17:16); the wicked “forsake” God’s law (Ps 119:53); righteous do not “forsake” the ordinances of God (Isa 58:2); the servant of Abraham blesses God for not having “forsaken” the mercy and truth toward his master (Gen 24:27); God will not “forsake” His miraculous

3 Ibid.

4 Schultz points out that “God can be the subject of יָֽרָה with man as the object. The promise is that God will never forsake the righteous by allowing him to fall into the hands of the wicked (Ps 37:25, 33).” Schultz, “יָֽרָה,” 659. Schultz adds to this by stating that God makes a promise to David. The promise is that “even if his children forsake the divine law, God will not violate his covenant with the Davidic dynasty (Ps 89:30–37).” Ibid.

5 Gerstenberger remarks, “Beyond persons and inanimate things, abstract entities can also be left or forsaken, since such abstractions can represent relationships, values, or other features that can be actualized concretely or personally.” Gerstenberger, “יָֽרָה,” 587.
provision (Isa 42:16); Rehoboam rejected the advice and counsel of the people (1 Kgs 12: 8, 13); Israel did not “forsake” harlotry (Ezek 23:8).

A further aspect of בז is that it can be used figuratively. When it is used in the figurative sense, man is the subject, i.e., man can forsake the Lord. This seems to have been a customary threat for Israel, and as a result, God continuously warned them (Deut 28:20; 31:16; Judg 10:10; Jer 1:16). Schultz helps flesh this out as he notes that when “man is the subject, the verb is used to indicate abandonment of virtuous qualities” (1 Kgs 12:8; II Chron 10:8, 13; Prov 2:13; 3:3; 4:2, 6; 10:17; 15:10). Alden adds to this idea as he states, “The root ‘בז is a covenantal term that is frequently (more than 100x) used to denote the act of breaking the covenant (Deut 29:25; Jer 2:13, 17, 19; 22:9; Dan 11:30).” Thus, Israel is accused of following after gods, and forsaking its covenant with the Lord (Deut 29:24; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Hosea 4:10). A. P. Stahli contends that “‘בז is chiefly at home in the covenant tradition. In the statement of the abandonment of Yahweh or his covenant (Deut 29:24; Jer 22:9), it implies an accusation of apostasy and breach of covenant (Deut 31:16).” The basic idea seems to be that God’s chosen people made a volitional decision and chose to forsake their relationship with God. As a consequence, God made a

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7 Alden, “בז,” 365. Alden writes, “God charged Israel with having broken the covenant. When the curses of the covenant were unleashed, the covenant people were treated as a noncovenant people. Yahweh abandoned his people to someone he had promised to be present. The divine abandonment was temporary, however. The prophets who proclaimed the divine abandonment, judgment, and alienation also spoke of the renewal of the covenant, of the greater involvement of God in the person of the messianic King and in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, of the spiritual transformation of Israel and of the nations, and of the opening up of a new era of fulfillment in anticipation of the final transformation of all things.” Ibid.

8 Schultz, “בז,” 659.

specific covenant with Israel, and those violating that covenant had “forsook” the Lord (Gen 12:1–3). When human beings are the subject, they forsake or abandon the Lord (Judges 2:12–13; 2 Kgs 21:22), his covenant (Jer 22:9), law (2 Chron 12:1), or statues (1 Kgs 18:18).10

While man is often the subject of עשה, God can be the subject of the verb. When God is the subject, the most common objects are his people, Israel or Judah (Jer 12:7), the king (2 Chron 32:31), or an individual (Ps 71:11). In many sentences the verb is negated—God will not forsake his people (Gen 28:15; Deut 31:6, 8). Or the psalmists often pray, “do not forsake me” (Ps 38:21; 71:9, 18; 119:8).

The purpose behind this short study is to construct a baseline of meaning and understanding for the word עשה. It has been shown that the word עשה can be comprehended in a simple utilitarian way, meaning to leave, in a spatial, locative manner. But also, עשה can carry the idea of leaving nonconcrete, abstracts such as commandments, laws, justice, wisdom, glory, loyalty, compassion, counsel, and guidance. Thus, one can “leave, forsake” the Lord, a place, an abstract notion, and a person, such as a father and mother, in both a spatial and abstract manner. The notion that seems to be presented, in Gen 2:24, is that a man leaves his former family to establish a new family.

The second word to explore is פד. The word פד is utilized approximately fifty-five times in the Old Testament. Within these various usages the word, פד is most often used to

express the idea of: “to stick,” “cling,” “cleave to,” or “keep close.” George J. Brooke notes other usages as follows: pual “be joined together”; hiphil “cause to cling, pursue, reach”; hophal “made to cleave to”; noun (three times) “welding, soldering, jointed/joined part”; adjective “cleaving, attached to, holding fast to.”

Usage of the word *dbq* indicates the idea of an object “sticking to” another object. Some of the examples are: a person is to “cleave” to their family inheritance (Num 36:7, 9); David’s hand “clung” to his sword as he fought the Philistines (2 Sam 23:10); Job’s skin was “clinging to” his bones (Job 19:20); the tongue is “sticking to” the roof of one’s mouth (Job 29:10; Ps 137:6); the scales of a crocodile are “clinging” together (Job 41:15); body “clings” to the earth (Ps 44:25; 119:25); sash “clings” to the waist (Jer 13:11); fish “cling” to the scales of the crocodile (Eze 29:4). In addition to the definition, the root הזר is commonly found with the prepositions *be* “in”; *l* “to”; *’el* “unto”; *’im* “with”; *’ah*“re “after.” Through the use of prepositions, the meaning of הזר becomes more focused and nuanced. It is by and large thought that these prepositions along with הזר provide a larger outlook for how הזר was used.

Further, *dbq* is used to point out “clinging” to a person. Some examples are: Jehoram “clung” to the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kgs 3:3); the Lord warns that not following His ways will cause the Lord to bring back the diseases of Egypt which the Israelites were afraid, and the

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12 Ibid.

diseases will “cling” to Israel (Deut 28:60); Naaman’s leprosy “clings” to Gehazi because he followed after greed (2 Kgs 5:27).

Another facet in which קָבָד is used introduces the idea of things sticking together out of loyal affection. Solomon “clung” to his wives (1 Kgs 11:2, i.e., Gen 2:4); Shechem “clung” to Dinah out of his love for her (Gen 34:3). The manner in which these passages reveal dbq seem to be rather noteworthy. George Brooke points out that the “verb is commonly used metaphorically to express a state of loyalty, affection, or close proximity. Intimacy (perhaps even sexual intimacy) is implied in a man leaving his parents ‘to cleave’ or ‘to be united’ to his wife.”

These various passages indicate the notion that קָבָד is somehow associated with the word ’הָב – love, perhaps a love demonstrated through loyalty, affection, and intimacy. The nuance of the word expands beyond the idea of simply “clinging to” someone that one loves.

Perhaps, the most profound way that dbq is disclosed is through the linkage to the Lord. Often, there are words used along with dbq such as fear, serve, love, obey, allegiance, walk, and keep. These assorted words convey a message that one’s efforts are needed to display a life of dedication and loyalty to the Lord. Man must “cling” to the Lord (Josh 23:8, 12); Hezekiah “clung” to the ways of the Lord (2 Kgs 18:6); the children of Israel are told to “cling” to the


15 Brooke notes that dbq is used “synonymously with the word ’הָב, love” as shown in Gen 34:3 and 1 Kgs 11:2. Ibid.

16 Brooke points out that the “term is used of the human relationship with God.” Brooke, “קָבָד,” 911.

17 Kalland adds to this concept by stating that “in Jer 13:11, it is said that the Lord caused the Israelites to cleave to him, and Hezekiah is approved because he cleave to the Lord. In these verses parallel words and phrases that describe this proper attitude to the Lord are: fear, serve, love, obey, swear by his name, walk in his ways, and keep his commandments.” Kalland, “קָבָד,” 178.
ways of the Lord (Josh 22:5); God caused the houses of Israel and Judah to “cling” to Him (Jer 13:11).

There are other occasions where *dbq* transmits the idea of being loyal to someone, but, not in the sense of being intimate with that person.  

Ruth “clung” to her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 1:14); Boaz told Ruth to “stay close” to the women so she could successfully glean (Ruth 2:8, 21); the men of Judah “clung” to David their king during the uprising of Sheba (2 Sam 20:2); a friend “sticks closer” than a brother (Prov 18:24).

Another feature of the word *qvw* is to “overtake” or “pursue” someone. Laban “overtakes” Jacob (Gen 31:23); Micah “overtakes” the children of Dan (Judg 18:22); the Israelites “pursued” after a group of Benjamites (Judg 20:45); the Israelites “pursued” the Philistines (1 Sam 14:22); the Philistines “pursued” Saul (1 Sam 31:2; 1 Chron 10:2).

There are many examples from the Book of Deuteronomy. Some passages are as follows: “you who ‘held fast’ to the Lord your God are alive” (Deut 4:4); “you shall fear the Lord your God: you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall ‘hold fast,’ and take oaths in His name” (10:20); “for if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to ‘hold fast’ to Him” (11:22); “you shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and ‘hold fast’ to Him” (13:4); “that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may ‘cling’ to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days”


19 Kalland states that “*dbq* means to pursue or even overtake someone, usually in a hostile sense.” Ibid.
Thus, some have argued that these point to the influences of a Deuteronomistic Historian on Gen 2:24.

It has been argued that קָבֵד can be understood as a familiar word. It basically means to “cling or stick to” someone or even abstract ideas and thoughts. The distinction of קָבֵד is that it can have the idea of loyal affection (love) attached to it. As far as Gen 2:24 is concerned, it seems that קָבֵד is suggestive within the phrase “one flesh.”

The third word to study in Gen 2:24 is דָּגָה. Interestingly enough, דָּגָה is used in most of the books in the Old Testament. To be more specific, Herbert Wolf claims that דָּגָה occurs 960 times as a noun, adjective, or adverb, as a cardinal or ordinal number, often used in a distributive sense. He notes that דָּגָה “is closely identified with yahad ‘to be united’ and with ro’sh ‘first, head,’ especially in connection with the ‘first day’ of the month (Gen 8:13).”

A primary manner that דָּגָה is used is with the idea of solidarity and unity. The entire earth had “one” language and “one” speech (Gen 11:1). Joshua told the Israelites that “one” man shall chase a thousand (Josh 23:10). God told Gideon that he would defeat Midian as “one” man

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20 G. Sauer states that דָּגָה “occurs in almost all books of the Old Testament (lacking in Joel, Micah, Nahum, Hab), concentrated especially of course, in books containing lists, legal sections, descriptions, etc. (Num 180x, 89x in Num 7 alone; Ezek 106x; Exod 99x; 1 Kgs 63x; Josh 60x).” G. Sauer, “דָּגָה,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 79.


Zephaniah’s comments about people serving God with “one” shoulder which seems to portray the idea of working together (Zep 3:9). Israel affirms with “one” voice that they will enter into a covenant with the Lord (Ex 24:3). Wolf notes, “Sometimes the phrase ‘as one man’ can mean ‘all at once’ (Num 14:15).” He later states, “The phrase can also refer to a nation aroused to take united action against gross injustice (Jud 20:8; 1 Sam 11:7).” The distinction of the word כָּפָר as used in these contexts, presents the idea that strength comes as a consequence of being unified to become one.

Another manner in which כָּפָר was described, was in the idea of solitude. Nathan told David that the poor man only had “one” small lamb that he tended (2 Sam 12:3). Geber was the “only” governor in the land (1 Kgs 4:29). Samson, in his loneliness, calls out to the Lord for “one” opportunity to avenge himself against the Philistines (Judg 16:28). Solitude was a dangerous thought for the Israelite. Jensen states, “Solitary oneness is a fearful prospect for an Israelite, whose identity was defined relationally in terms of the many (Eccl 4:9–11).”

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23 Ibid.

24 Philip Jensen comments, “The force of the one is normally felt in the context of the many. The one distinguished from the group may be a representative or a spokesman (2 Kgs 3:11; 6:12), an agent whose actions further the plot (2 Kgs 4:22), or simply the first in a sequence (2 Macc 7:2). The hyperbolic contrast between the single individual and the many stresses the significance of God’s action in blessing (Abraham, Isa 51:2) or in giving success in war (Josh 23:10). Conversely, Deut 32:30 portrays the outworking of the curse in that one routs a thousand, and the prophets’ more realistic proportions are almost as terrifying (Isa 4:1). The negative formulation (“not one”) can stress divine sovereignty and faithfulness (1 Kgs 8:56), but it can also indicate the universality of human corruption (Ps 14:3; cf. Eccl 7:28).” Philip P. Jensen, “כָּפָר,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1997), 349.

25 Jensen continues by remarking: “Solitary oneness is a fearful prospect for an Israelite, whose identity was defined relationally in terms of the many (Eccl 4:9–11). Despite his uniqueness, God is not to be regarded as solitary or alone (לְבַדָּד), for he is always manifest in relationship to himself, his heavenly court, his angel, or others (cf. Gen 6:3; Exod 23:20–23; 33:14).” Ibid., 350.
An additional occurrence of the word τὸ σῶμα concerns the union of the man and the woman. Jensen writes that “communication between one and another brings agreement and harmony (Zech 8:21). Oneness in kinship and covenant allegiance is the ultimate ideal for human society, but is always in contention with the impulse toward disunity (Gen 2:24, leading to 3:12) and scattering (11:1, 6 leading to vv. 8 –9).” From time to time, united action and corporate solidarity were possible events. As stated earlier, Israel agreed with “one” voice to make a covenant with the Lord (Ex 24:3). Israel intentionally united as “one” to take an action. As far as the union between the man and the woman is concerned, the communion between them seems to be an intentional resolve that required some sort of action. Even if that action was not pleasing unto the Lord.

It seems to be that the word τὸ σῶμα reveals that man can have a desire outside of God’s intent. Man, because of his freewill, had the potential to be disobedient to the Lord. This capacity was in man’s freewill that led to his desire to eat of the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden. By eating from the tree, it allowed mankind to discern between good and evil and “be like God” (NASB). Man now had the capacity, because of his desire, to be elevated a dangerous place. It appears, according to the text, that in some manner man had become one with God. Gen 3:22 states, “Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’” (NKJV). Yet, without the capacity to remedy his sin problem, man was endangered of

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26 Wolf contends, “‘Adam and Eve are described as ‘one flesh’ (Gen 2:24), which includes more than sexual unity. In Gen 34:16 the men of Shechem suggest intermarriage with Jacob’s children in order to become ‘one people.’” Wolf, “πῶς,” 30.

eating of the tree of life and living eternally in that sinful state. Man was “like one” of the gods, but did not have the same power or capabilities.

Furthermore, man’s attempt to be like God was not acceptable. God alone was to be worshiped, which excludes even self.\(^\text{28}\) Man was to listen to God and have “one” heart toward Him (Deut 6:3–6).\(^\text{29}\) Jensen remarks that “prophets realized that only God could ultimately grant ‘one heart and one way,’ a single-minded devotion to God and a common lifestyle subject to his will (Jer 32:39; Ezek 11:19).”\(^\text{30}\)

This brief study has shown that the word דָּבָר seems to have a more profound significance and meaning than just a number. It seems to emphasize a union of oneness, while at the same time acknowledging some type of multiplicity within that unity.\(^\text{31}\) Yet, this word alone is only part of the implication that lies behind Gen 2:24.

דָּבָר

The fourth word to be examined is the word רָכֶב. רָכֶב was used in various texts in the Old Testament. רָכֶב is found 273 times in the Old Testament; and out of the 273 occurrences, one

\(^\text{28}\) Sauer, “דָּבָר,” 79. Sauer correctly maintains that the “Old Testament categorically excluded any deification of humanity (Gen 3:22) and any worship of gods or powers beside Yahweh.” Ibid.

\(^\text{29}\) Jenson states, “The Shema (Deut 6:4–9) is a central theological text in Deut (→ Shema: Theology). The syntax of the verbless sentence is disputed, but analogy with other uses of ‘the Lord our God’ in Deut suggests that the traditional syntax should be retained (‘The Lord our God, the Lord [is] One’). ‘One’ is not a title or name of God, but an adjective of quality.” Jensen, “דָּבָר,” 350. Lohfink and Bergman, “דָּבָר,” Norbert Lohfink and Jan Bergman contend that “Israel is a ‘unique nation on earth’ because of her deliverance from Egypt and because of her covenant relationship to Yahweh (2 Sam 7:23; 1 Chron 17:21).” 198.


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hundred fifty-three of these usages can be found in the Pentateuch.³² These various usages point to a basic thought for the word רְבָּר as being “flesh.”³³ Robert Chisholm elaborates by stating: “The word is used of both animal and human flesh and refers on occasion (especially when used with kol, ‘all of’) to humankind and/or the animal kingdom in general (Gen 6:12–13, 17, 19; 7:16, 21; 8:17; Lev 17:14; Num 16:22; etc.).”³⁴

Since the basic meaning of the word רְבָּר is straightforward, it becomes useful to see how the Old Testament uses the word “flesh” for animals and man. Some examples of animals are: The “flesh” of an ox shall not be eaten if it gores someone (Ex 21:28). The ravens brought Elijah bread and “flesh” to eat (1 Kgs 17:6). Sacrifices are called “flesh” (1 Sam 2:13, 15; Is 22:15; Hos 8:13; Mic 3:3, etc.). Some examples for man are: the baker is told that his “flesh” would be eaten by the birds (Gen 40:10); Moses’ leprous hand was restored to be like the rest of his “flesh” (Ex 4:7); Job states that his “flesh” is coated with worms and dust (Job 7:5); God tells Egypt that He will lay their “flesh” on the mountains (Ezek 32:5). The thrust behind the word bsr seems to be that all men are created similar one to another.³⁵ Yet, there is one curious aspect of the word רְבָּר

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³³ G. Gerleman notes, “About 50x basar indicates the body, i.e., the visible flesh of the person or, as an exception, the animal (Job 41:15), the corporal in its totality with emphasis upon the visual and the graphic. The usage always concerns the live body; basar is never used of the corpse, not even in Ezek 32:5. For all this, basar is deeply tied to the material and is never used in the sense of ‘appearance, figure;” basar is corpus, not figura. G. Gerleman, “רְבָּר,” in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 284.


³⁵ N. P. Bratsiotis states that “the frequently emphasized similarity of all men, which is based on the fact that all men have something in common. Thus, the Old Testament refers in particular to the common creator of all men (Isa 64:7; etc.), or to the descent of all men from the first human being (Wisd 7:1ff.; → זֶרֶד `adham), to man’s common origin (Job 33:6), existence, death (34:15; Wisd 7:5f.), birth (Job 31:15), to the common nature of all men (10:10ff.; Ps 33:15); etc. Generally speaking, all these things that men have in common can be denoted by basar,
when used with this meaning. G. Gerleman notes this as he states that “the word is used in contrast to various terms for the spiritual life: → ruah ‘spirit’ (Gen 6:3; Num 16:22; 27:16; Isa 31:3; Joel 3:1), → nepes ‘soul’ (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:23; Job 14:22), → leb ‘heart’ (Ezek 44:7, 9; Psa 84:3).”

Another usage for the word יָדָע is “body.” Oswalt notes that “basar can be extended to mean ‘body’ even without any reference to bones (Num 8:7; 2 Kgs 4:34; Eccl 2:3, etc.). As such it refers simply to the external form of a person.” The healed leper should wash his “body” on the seventh day (Lev 14:6). A man that has had a discharge shall wash his “body” (Lev 15:13, 16). The Lord gave Moses instructions for how a Levite should cleanse his “body” so that he could be dedicated (Num 8:7).

ִיָדָע can also be used in the context of male genitalia. Abraham is told to circumcise the “flesh” of his foreskin (Gen 17:11; cf. Lev 12:3). The children of Israel are told to make linen trousers to cover the “naked flesh” of the priest. Leviticus 15 discusses the discharge from the “flesh” (Lev 15:2–19).

In addition to the abovementioned cases, the word יָדָע suggests the meaning of kinship. In order to recognize this, one needs to review Gen 2:23. There, Adam proclaims, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The proclamation that Adam declared lets the reader of

which, as the physical aspect of man, represents his tangible reality in an emphatic way, and makes clear the similarity of human nature dependent on this, as well as the relationship of men to one another as a collective idea, conditioned by the fleshly.” N. P. Bratsiotis, “יָדָע,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 326.


37 Oswalt, “יָדָע,” 136. Oswalt notes that “it would be inappropriate to think that the Hebrew conceived of a living soul inhabiting an otherwise dead body. Rather they saw the human reality as permeating all the components with the totality being the person.” Ibid.
Genesis know that Adam recognized the uniqueness of the one standing before him. She was a living creature just like himself, and “the exclamation reflects what the narration has sought to show: there is a unique compatibility of the man and the woman.”

Claus Westermann brings light to this notion as he comments, “The author uses what is known as ‘the formula relationship.’” This type of relationship terminology can be found in Gen 29:14 as Laban discovers that Jacob is his sister’s child, or “when the tribes of Israel approach David at Hebron” with the same lingo (2 Sam 5:1). In each incident there is the sense of a real relationship.

Gordon Wenham strengthens this insight as he calls this type of relationship a “traditional kinship formula.” Thus, there seems to be a connection that takes place in some real sense between the man and woman that makes them want to choose one another in unification as mates. Mathews gives further substance to this as he shares that “to refer to someone as being of one’s own ‘flesh and bone’ (Gen 2:23) was to say more than that they shared the same bodily


40 Chisholm notes, “The phrase must be interpreted in the light of the man’s statement in 2:23: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,’ the meaning of which is informed by the idiomatic expression ‘flesh and bone,’ a phrase referring to kinship relationship within clan and tribal contexts (Gen 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12–13). The language of Gen 2:23–24 suggests that the first marriage was regarded as a kinship (‘flesh and blood’) relationship which, because of its temporal priority, supersedes all such bold relationships, even that of parent-child.” Chisholm, “תֵּץ,” 778.


42 There is noticeably a difference between the two – he is male (king/ruler and priest), and she is female (helper). Each of them has their own responsibilities and roles, but they are to be united to one another for one common goal. Hamilton maintains, “Circumstances will not alter the loyalty and commitment of the one to the other.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 180.
heritage. Again, to say that man and woman become one flesh in the sexual embrace (Gen 2:24) is to say more than that they are united.”  

The word נברא appears to have implications that suggests how kinship is made possible between a man and a woman. The Bible states that mankind was made of flesh (נברא). The Bible also provides a warning that the flesh was not to be exposed; for it is a shameful thing (Gen 3:7; 9:21–7; Is 47:3; Ezek 16:8, 36–37). One is not to uncover the nakedness of a kinsman (Lev 18:6); including their parents (Lev 18:7–8; 20:11); sister (Lev 18:9, 11: 20:17); granddaughter (Lev 18:10); aunt (Lev 18:12–14; 20:19–20); uncle (Lev 18:14); daughter in law (Lev 18:15); sister in law (18:16; 20:21). And one is not to uncover the nakedness of “a woman and her daughter or son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter” (Lev 18:17); “nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive” (Lev 18:19); and a man is not to lie with a woman during menstruation (Lev 18:19; 20:18). In Ex 20:26, man is warned that he should not expose himself when approaching the altar. Priest had to cover “the flesh of their nakedness” (בש affirmation) with linen pants (Ex 28:42); a man was to cover his naked body with sackcloth when he was distressed before the Lord (Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31; 21:10; 1 Kgs 20:31–32; 21:27; 2 Kgs 6:30; 19:1–2; job 15:16; Is 15:3; 37:1–2; Jer 6:26; Jonah 3:6–8). In exposing the flesh, the idea brought by the word נברא is that it reveals man’s weakness.  

Walter Brueggemann remarks, “As such the term obviously does not relate simply to the physical notion


44 Hamilton remarks, “If we accept the maxim that in the Old Testament flesh (Heb.basar) is often a symbol for an individual’s weakness and frailty.” Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 179. Walter Brueggemann states that “it is clear that the term bsr means weakness, empty of power and meaning. . . . Flesh is that which has no staying power or capacity to work its will in its environment.” Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (GN 2,23a),” The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 32/4 (1970), 533.
of flesh, but includes the psychological notion of frailty.” Brueggemann argues that “one flesh” does not have in mind a common birth, but an “oath of abiding loyalty” to overcome the frailty. Kinship between a man and a woman occurs because of man were made of flesh, and made an oath to one another to have abiding loyalty. It was being made of flesh that gave a man and a woman commonness. The commonness was that they needed one another. Bratsiotis notes, “basar → ‘echadh, ‘one flesh,’ in Gen 2:24 is a special case. One can find here a reference to monogamy (cf. Mal 2:14ff; Prov 2:17), but also an allusion to the consummation of marriage.” The two fleshes came together and exposed their nakedness to one another so that they could unite in flesh to become one with a common goal.

Another aspect of the word basar is the mortality of man in the sense of him being weak. Chisholm explains as he observes, “As the sovereign ruler of all creatures, the Lord provides food for all creatures (Ps 136:25) and determines their lifespan (Job 12:10; 34:15). Being

45 Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (GN 2,23a),” 533. Bratsiotis remarks that “men (all of whom are indeed basar), in their existential situation and in their general relationship to each other, are placed before God and in sharp contrast to him.” Bratsiotis, “rfb,” 327.

46 Hamilton observes that to become one flesh has the intent of a “covenantal statement.” He later states, “Circumstances will not alter the loyalty and commitment of the one to the other.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17, 180.

47 Bratsiotis states, “The relationship shared by all men in that they all are basar is specifically applied to the blood relationship through the so-called relationship formula.” This formula originated in Gen 2:23. Bratsiotis continues as he states that “basar is used in a neutral sense, because here the main emphasis is placed on the relationship itself. Thus adham (man? Adam?), after he has been made aware that his nature is different from that of the animals, and after he has declared that they have a subordinate position to man by giving names to the various species, sates as → 'ish (man) the concrete and predominant unity with the 'ishshah (woman) that God took from him, a unity based on basar, and their common nature which is obvious at first glance from Gen 2:23.” Bratsiotis, “rfb,” 328.

48 Bratsiotis explains as he states, “that which was basar ‘echadh before the creation of the ‘ishshah, ‘woman’ (Gen 2:21f.), is again united into basar ‘echadh through the consummation of marriage (2:24), and the basar ‘echadh attested thereby bears undeniable witness to its complete unity.” Ibid.

49 Oswalt emphasizes that “flesh is transitory, weak, mortal.” Ibid.
composed of ‘flesh,’ humankind is as short lived as the grass of the field (Isa 40:6) or a passing
breeze (Ps 78:39).\textsuperscript{50} N. P. Bratsiotis adds, but from a different path as he notes, “The Old
Testament emphasizes that God is not basar, and sharply distinguishes him from all basar.
Whenever basar is connected with God, it simply emphasizes the immense distance and
differences of flesh from God, the complete dependence of the flesh on God, and the striking
antithesis between flesh and God.”\textsuperscript{51}

This sharp distinction between God and mankind (flesh) highlights the transcendence of
Yahweh. Gerleman illustrates this as he writes that “basar is theologically significant in passages
that express a qualitative assessment.”\textsuperscript{52} But he further adds that in two passages “the bestowal of
a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone is an aspect of religious renewal.”\textsuperscript{53} Thus, mankind as
flesh must have a spiritual renewal for right standing with God.

This brief study has sought to show that the word \textit{rwb} has a deeper significance and
meaning. It basically means “flesh” in the sense of being weak and mortal. But, a distinction of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Chisholm, “\textit{rwb},” 777. Chisholm furthers his point by stating: “The moral nature of God’s ancient
covenant people, which made them susceptible to moral weakness, caused him to be merciful toward them and
relent from sending his judgment with full force (Ps 78:38). Because their fleshly composition makes them weak
and mortal, human beings are a false object of trust (Jer 17:5) and are unable to resist God’s might (2 Chron 32:8) or
to harm those whom he chooses to protect (Ps 56:4). If mortal human beings are a false object of trust, the same
holds true for the war horse, which shares humankind’s fleshly nature (Isa 31:3).” Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Bratsiotis, “\textit{rwb},” 330. Bratsiotis continues his point by writing: “This serves to bring out the nature and
characteristics of God, especially his superiority, eternity, omnipotence, goodness, holiness, providence, etc., in
short, everything that stands in contrast to the nature and characteristics of man.” Ibid. Bratsiotis later writes, “The
Old Testament frequently affirms Yahweh’s superiority over all flesh. Yahweh declares that he is the God of all
flesh (Jer 32:27), and his people are to honor him as such.” Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Gerleman, “\textit{rwb},” 284–285.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 285.
\end{itemize}
is that man, as flesh, is distinctly lower than God and needs a spiritual renewal to come into a right standing with God.

**Key Phrases**

At this juncture, it is necessary to examine a few phrases that are used idiomatically in Gen 2:24. This first one will be “one flesh.” Oddly enough, the only place the words רָפֶבֶט לְגֹבל are used in the Old Testament is in Gen 2:24. The other places the words רָפֶבֶט לְגֹבל are used as a collection, in the Bible, are in the New Testament (Matt 19:4–6; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31). Even though these passages are in the New Testament, they are passages used in support of the ideal as presented in Gen 2:24.

The basic connotation of the words “one flesh” seems to present the idea of a complete unity and solidarity between the man and woman. The point is that Gen 2:24 suggests that God created two individuals with “uniqueness of personalities.” But, God brought the two together

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54 Bruce Kaye observes, “The absence of any serious consideration of the term ‘one flesh’ by the Rabbis fairly reflects the attitude of the rest of the Old Testament in so far as the term does not occur again. Marriage is, of course, referred to in many passages in the Old Testament and there is legislative provision for certain aspects of marriage. It is apparent from this absence of any use of the phrase, and the presence of extensive discussion of the nature of marriage and of the appropriate legislative framework within which marriage can operate in Israelite society, that there is no fundamental theological or moral concept which is expressed by this phrase which was important in Israel’s thinking throughout the entire span of its history.” Bruce Kaye, “‘One Flesh’ and Marriage,” Colloquium 22/2 (1990): 49.

55 A. F. L. Beeston comments, “‘Flesh’ in this context can only, it seems to me, be a legal term for clan membership; to say therefore that a man who abandons his parental clan thereby becomes ‘one flesh’ with his wife implies entry into membership of the wife’s clan, with all its attendant rights and obligations—particularly, no doubt, in the domains of inheritance and the blood-feud system.” A. F. L. Beeston, “One Flesh,” Vetus Testamentum 36/1 (1986): 117.

56 Lee McGlone insists, “Intimacy ought not be understood as the loss of a person’s uniqueness, male or female, nor the absorption of one’s identity into that of another. The text infers that individuality, the uniqueness of personalities, was God’s idea. There were two persons created, both unique and yet capable of relating to the other in a way that enhanced meaningful existence. Their ‘oneness’ never negated their uniqueness. Within a family, healthy intimacy requires respect of each person’s individuality. There is a kind of intimacy, more a kind of dependency that requires the sacrifice of individuality. When intimacy is born of such selfishness that calls for the
for a particular purpose – to be “one flesh.” Gordon Wenham argues that the understanding of “one flesh” involves the concept of kinship.\footnote{Wenham argues that “one flesh” did “not denote merely the sexual union that follows marriage, or the children conceived in marriage, or even the spiritual and emotional relationship that it involves, though all are involved in becoming one flesh. Rather it affirms that just as blood relations are one’s flesh and bone, so marriage creates a similar kinship relation between man and wife. They become related to each other as brother and sister are.” Wenham, \textit{Genesis 1–15}, 71.} Perhaps, the basis for his opinion can be found in Gen 2:23, as the writer of Genesis makes a proclamation about the woman as she is brought before the man. The man states, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man” (NKJV).

In other places of the Old Testament, when the words “bone” and “flesh” are juxtaposed, there is the indication of kinship (Gen 2:23; 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12; 1 Chron 11:1; Job 2:5). James Brownson argues that the “one flesh” union is about kinship and not to a “physical gender complementarian” idea.\footnote{Brownson states, “Both in its immediate context, and in the wider canonical context, the language of ‘one flesh’ in Genesis 2:24 does not refer to physical gender complementarity, but to the common bond of shared kinship. Therefore, to say that the same-sex erotic acts depicted in Romans 1:26–27 are ‘against nature’ because they violate the physical complementarity of the genders depicted in the one-flesh union of Genesis 2:24 is simply mistaken. . . . As far as the creation accounts are concerned, then, gender complementarity, viewed through the lens of the physical or biological difference between the genders, cannot be construed as the basis for the Bible’s rejection of same-sex erotic relations.” James V. Brownson, \textit{Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 32–36. Elsewhere he states, “Genesis 2:24 can be understood to include sexual intercourse, but it does not refer solely to sexual intercourse. . . . In other words, the language of ‘one flesh’ is not simply a euphemistic way of speaking about sexual intercourse; it is a way of speaking about the kinship ties that are related to the union of man and woman in marriage, a union that includes sexual intercourse. It is important not to overgenitalize or oversexualize this passage.” \textit{Ibid.}, 87.} Yet, the various ways that the complementarian view is highlighted by Gen 2:24 is the best response to Brownson’s observation. Moreover, the idea as presented in Gen 2:24 seems to be more involved than just the functionality of kinship. Chisholm states, “The expression ‘one flesh,’ used of the relationship between the first man and woman
(Gen 2:24), draws attention to the inseparable bond inherent in the marriage relationship.”

The idea of the man and woman becoming “one flesh” seems to be an ideal principle that lays the foundation for unity and solidarity for the man and the woman. H. Leupold remarks that “one flesh” consists of a “complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse.” Then, as Victor Hamilton states, “Covenantally joined with his wife, the man and his spouse become one flesh.”

Developing upon the idea that the union, between the man and the woman was fashioned to be a covenant perhaps Gen 2:24 may present an idea of boundaries and limitations. Within a covenant, there are differences between the two different parties. Clearly, the man and the woman were to be seen as two separate individuals. As a consequence, coming together as one probably meant that they had to consent to certain objectives as a unit. Robert Kittel brings this to light as he comments, “This particular verse can be compared to the objectives in the mission


60 Robert B. Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?” Journal of Biblical Literature 105/1 (1986), 98. Lawton remarks that “the unity desired in 2:24 is broken when the man does not accept responsibility for his own action but blames his wife (3:12) and more explicitly in 3:16 when the woman is told: ‘your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’ In fact, 2:24 may be phrased as it is, with the ‘man as the subject of זָרָה and בַּרְבַּר,’ precisely to set up the reversal of 3:16. So 2:24 casts its shadow over the following narrative, helping to underline to all of Israel’s history, where the complicated relationships of men and women so often strayed from the divine intention. Indeed, it stretches into the crevices of universal human experience.” Ibid.


63 Kenneth Mathews notes that “the garden established a paradigm for marital behavior. That Eden was viewed by the Hebrews as the model, authoritative experience can be seen also in Jewish literature of the time but especially by Paul, who appeals to its events in speaking of the most profound theological tenets of Christianity (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:45) and in offering instructions concerning the propriety of worship (1 Cor 11:2–16; 1 Tim 2:11–15), moral behavior (1 Cor 6:16), and marriage (Eph 5:31).” Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, The New American Commentary, Vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 222.
statement of a business enterprise. They are specific and measurable; they drive the clarity of vision, the depth of a thing, and the details of a strategic plan.”

This initial one flesh union between the man and the woman, as described in Gen 2:24, could and perhaps should be seen as a societal precursor. This “societal precursor” was to become the foundation for all unions to follow. Mathews explains that this one flesh union “involves a declaration of intention and a redefining of obligations and relationships in a familial and social setting.”

So, the man breaks his innate covenantal obligations with his personal family (Ex 20:12) and at the same time he makes a new covenantal relationship with the woman of another family. Kaye contends,

This is not the same as kinship in the sense of flesh and blood relationships by common related parentage but is an extension of kinship to bring into relation the contributing

64 Robert S. Kittel, “‘They Shall Be One Flesh:’ Fulfilling the Ideal of Creation Through the Family,” Journal of Unification Studies 6 (2004–2005): 41. Kittel elaborates on these goals by stating: “In the Garden of Eden, our Creator laid out three broad goals. Genesis 1:28 states that God blessed Adam and Eve, directing them to: 1) be fruitful, 2) multiply, and 3) have dominion over creation. God also gave our first human ancestors very specific objectives and a methodology for accomplishing these ideals – Gen 2:24.” Ibid.

65 Kaye explains: “This editorial comment clearly picks up the ‘flesh of my flesh’ of man’s response to God’s provision of a woman for him and refers that Adam and Eve model to marriage which is established by the choice of a man in relation to another woman which the writer knows from his own social experience. Thus, whereas, in the case of Adam and Eve, the bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh pattern is established by the creative fiat of God, in the case of marriage, the ‘One Flesh’ relationship between a man and his wife is created by the deliberate choice of the man and, probably, also of the woman. Whatever the particular circumstances were in the writer’s experience, this does not affect the fact that, in his view, the arranged marriage between a man and a woman, whereby the man cleaves to the woman, establishes a similar kind of relationship as is described in the ideal ‘creation’ of Adam and Eve.” Kaye, “‘One Flesh’ and Marriage,” 48.

66 Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 224. Mathews writes: “Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the divine norm from the outset of creation. Mosaic instruction shows considerable efforts to safeguard this ideal against its dissolution by clarifying what is ‘family.’ Sexuality was instrumental in defining what a household was in Israel; abrogation of sexual boundaries threatened the identity of this core social institution. Without proper limits ‘family’ ceased, and the consequence was the undoing of Israel as a nation, the same fate suffered by their predecessors (Lev 18:24–30). Strong prohibitions against sexual offenses often prescribed the penalty of death, as in the case of the heinous sins of murder and idolatry.” Ibid.
families in any marriage which is established. At the same time, however, it is a restriction of definition of the character of the kinship relation in that it defines the man/wife relationship in more exclusive terms than previously existing kinship ties. It is in this sense not kinship, but something beyond kinship, and something which creates further different kinds of kinship patterns.67

Consequently, the union in Gen 2:24 becomes the accepted societal standard for the relationship between a man and a woman.

Two words which further drive home this idea are “forsake” and “cleave.” Hamilton keenly asserts that “the most crucial element in this verse is the verbs it uses: forsakes and clings. The verb forsake frequently describes Israel’s rejection of her covenant relationship with Yahweh (Jer 1:16; 2:13, 17, 19; 5:7; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4; 22:9; many other examples from the Old Testament could be cited). By contrast, the verb cling often designates the maintenance of the covenant relationship (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; 30:20).”68 Kenneth Mathews adds that “‘leave’ and ‘cling’ are terms commonly used in the context of covenant, indicating covenant breach (e.g., Deut 28:20; Hos 4:10) or fidelity.”69

There is an intentionality of the man and woman to “forsake” their past and “cling” to a new paradigm. Wenham conveys this sentiment as he notes that the “traditional translation ‘leaves’ suggests that the man moves from his parents and sets up home elsewhere, whereas in fact Israelite marriage was usually patrilocal, that is, the man continued to live in or near his

67 Kaye, “‘One Flesh’ and Marriage,” 48.

68 Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1–17, 181. Hamilton adds to this idea by arguing that “to leave father and mother and cling to one’s wife means to sever one loyalty and commence another. Already Scripture has sounded the note that marriage is a covenant rather than an ad-hoc, makeshift arrangement.” Ibid.

69 Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 222.
parents’ home. It was the wife who left home to join her husband.”  

In Gen 2:24, God instigates the union between the man and woman, but the man and woman have to make a volitional choice to become “one flesh.”

Furthermore, the one flesh union becomes one of man’s top priorities. Bruce Waltke elaborates as he comments, “Because husband and wife are one flesh, the bond of marriage has priority over the bond of procreation. The husband’s obligations to his wife take precedence over other priorities.” A man’s responsibilities were to his parents; however, with the union between the man and woman these responsibilities changed.

As indicated earlier, the one flesh union carries with it societal ramifications. Mathews states, “Without question 2:24 serves as the bedrock for Hebrew understanding of the centrality of the nuclear family for the survival of society.” David Atkinsonunpacks this notion as he insists that the “marriage covenant has a social, external, legal dimension: marriage is not simply a private arrangement between two people – a marriage begins a new social arrangement in which they accept some accountability as a couple to their wider society.”

70 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 70. Wenham reasons that this idea points to a large context: “Israel is bidden not to forsake the poor and the Levite, or the covenant (Deut 12:19; 14:27; 29:24). On the other hand, God promises not to forsake Israel (Deut 31:8; Josh 1:5).” Ibid.


74 Ibid., 224.

The idea is that the two, while leaving their existing societal units, come together now to create a new societal unit. Cussuto explains this as he states, “The meaning of the verse is simply this: whilst a man is single, he forms part of his father’s family, but when he takes a wife, he founds a new family; so long as he is in his father’s house, all his love is dedicated to his father and mother, but when he marries, his love for his wife transcends that for his parents.” So these two familial units of society, even though they were separate, are now to function as a new unit within the larger society.

Textual Turning Points

One further feature of Gen 2:24 is that scholars have debated whether the verse is actually a continuation of the man’s words, or narrative comment. Gordon Wenham argues in favor of it being a statement made by the narrator. He writes, “This is not a continuation of the man’s remarks in v 23, but a comment of the narrator, applying the principles of the first marriage to every marriage.”

In favor of the verse being a narrative comment is the word הָלַקָל. In other places that הָלַקָל is used, there appears to be some type of narrative contribution (Gen 10:9; 11:9; 16:14; 32:32). Sarna states that in the Hebrew “‘al ken is not part of the narration, but it introduces an etiological observation on the part of the Narrator; that is, the origin of an existing custom or institution is assigned to some specific event in the past.” Gerhard von Rad also argues that the

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77 Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 70.

78 Sarna, Genesis, 23. Sarna explains his position by writing: “In this case, some interrelated and fundamental aspects of the marital relationship are traced to God’s original creative act and seen as part of the
narrator’s textual addition is an etiological endeavor to uphold the ideal union between the man and woman.  

Certainly, if Gen 2:24 is a narrator’s comment, it supports the idea of the verse being used as the standard for one flesh unions between a man and woman. The union between the man and the woman in Gen 2:24 becomes the standard for all subsequent one flesh unions – that is for the man, the woman, and for their community. Robert Lawton states, “In short, the verse can be understood as a description of divine intention rather than of habitually observed fact.” But, whether the words are from the man or from the narrator, the principle intent of the verse still holds. This first one flesh union was two people uniting into one flesh and becoming the standard for all one flesh union that followed.

divinely ordained natural order. The fashioning of the woman from the man’s body explains why his bond to his wife takes precedence over his ties to his parents. It accounts for the mystery of physical love and the intense emotional involvement of male and female, as well as for their commonality of interests, goals, and ideals.” Ibid.

Von Rad comments, “The recognition of this narrative as etiological is theologically important. Its point of departure, the thing to be explained, is for the narrator something in existence, present, not something ‘paradisiacal’ and thus lost!” Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 85.

John Wright, “Sexuality Within the Old Testament,” St. Mark’s Review (June 1981): 4. Wright states, “The two are one. Like Adam, animals were created out of the ground, but they were not able to meet the social needs of man. So God had to resort to man himself as the source of this being, this life. Around a part of man God was able to manufacture her who was so like him that they were bold-brothers, and yet so different in function, that later on after the Fall, child-bearing was possible. What we have in these words from Genesis 2 is a kinship relationship described. So when Abimelech tried to become king he appealed to his mother’s clan claiming kinship: ‘Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh,’ the response being: ‘He is our brother’ (Judg 9:2 –4; cf. also 2 Sam 5:1). When Laban greeted Jacob, his nephew, he ‘embraced him and kissed him . . . and said to him, ‘Surely you are my bone and my flesh’ (Gen 29:13 –14; cf. 2 Sam 19:12). In this bond, the relationships are such that the kinsmen are one: if one is hurt, all suffer. The community was seen as one. What we have in Gen 2:23 is the stress on the oneness of the relationship between the man and the woman. ‘The “one flesh” (Gen 2:24) is no mystical consequence of sexual intercourse, but the expression of the “blood-brotherhood” of friends. This type of union results from sharing a common life, and from the practice of hospitality.” Ibid.

Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?” 98.
Summary

This chapter has attempted to explicitly evaluate the key words and phrases of Gen 2:24 to understand the rationale of Gen 2:24. Upon this assessment, it appears that Gen 2:24 lays the foundation of the unity and solidarity within the relationship between the man and the woman. By applying the principles that are identified within the key words and phrases of Gen 2:24, the first union between man and woman seems to become the ideal union for all other unions to ensue. What the narrator of Genesis asserts in 2:24 was to have application beyond its original context. Thus, this verse can be comprehended as the “description of divine intention.” Lawton amplifies this as he remarks that “[Gen] 2:24 casts its shadow over the following narrative, helping to underline to all of Israel’s history, where the complicated relationships of men and women so often strayed from the divine intention. Indeed, it stretches into the crevices of universal human experience.”

Thus, Gen 2:24 appears to become a sort of standard by which other one flesh unions are to be measured. As a consequence, the remaining chapters of this research are to compare other one flesh unions throughout Genesis to the standard laid out in Gen 2:24.

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82 Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?” 98.
Chapter Two

Unions Displaying Polygamy

Although Gen 2:24 lays the foundation for the unity and solidarity within the “one flesh” relationship, between the man and the woman, the ideal union is not always the path that man pursues. This chapter surveys unions that deviate from that standard through polygamy. Having already established that the divine intent was for a man and a woman to come together as one flesh, polygamy challenges that standard, even to the point of going against it. Thus, the union of polygamy is examined from Gen 4:19–24; Gen 29:15–30. Focus is given to the proper exegesis of those texts, then a comparison to the standard set forth in Gen 2:24 is discussed.

Polygamy

God’s ideal union included one man and one woman. But, man, for whatever reason, appears to have decided to form an addition to the ideal union – polygamy. Bigamy seems to have been common way of life within the Ancient Near East. In fact, polygamy occurred in

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83 Charles Scobie argues, “What emerges in the Old Testament is the ideal of monogamy. Polygamy is an example of pragmatic ethics, a practice that was tolerated (for a limited period of time) but never required. It was probably practiced to ensure the survival of the family at a time of very high infant mortality, and in the case of kings to ensure a male successor to the throne.” Charles H. H. Scobie, The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 807.

84 Polygamy refers to multiple spouses for either sex. Polygyny is a man who has multiple wives. Polyandry is a woman who has multiple husbands. The Bible cites various cases of polygyny, but does not report any case of polyandry.

85 Richard Davidson assists as he writes: “In the ancient Near East, where polytheism abounded, the practice of plural marriage, in particular polygyny, was acknowledged and accepted within the law codes. According to the earliest known laws of the Sumerians, the law reforms of King Uru-inimgina of Lagash (Early Dynastic period of the Sumerians, ca. 2378 –2371 B.C.E), women in earlier times could marry more than one husband, but King Uru-inimgina forbade continuation of this practice and made it a capital crime. In the Sumerian Lipit-Ishtar Law Code (ca. 1850 B.C.E.), at least four inheritance laws tacitly assume the social institution of polygyny. The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1700 B.C.E.) also acknowledged the practice of polygyny, allowing for a husband to take a concubine if his wife was infertile or to take a second wife if his first became diseased or tried to obtain a divorce by
most parts of the ancient biblical world, including Israel. Gordon P. Hugenberger observes that “actual Israelite [polygamist] practices closely resembles that of Mesopotamia and of ancient Egypt.” The Ancient Near East certainly played a part of Israel’s behavior. Interestingly, nowhere in the Bible is polygamy condemned. This can be ascertained from biblical passages such as Ex 21:10–11; Lev 18:17f.; 2 Sam 12:7f.; Deut 21:15–17; Jer 3:6 –13; and Ezekiel 23. Perhaps the reason concessions are made for polygamy in Bible, was because the union between a man and a woman was not viewed as a union of companionship, but it was to be a means for providing an heir. These provide the notion that if a man has two wives he must treat his two wives and their children the same. And, in addition, his two wives had to be loyal to him.

means of public scandal. The Middle Assyrian Laws (ca. 1450 B.C.E.) seem to have taken polygamy and concubinage for granted, placing no limit on the number of concubines that a man could have, regardless of his wife’s fertility status. Ancient Egyptian texts likewise reveal that the practice of polygamy was common during the second millennium B.C.E. among the pharaohs and the wealthy royal class, who could afford plural wives. Polygamy among the Hittites was apparently similar to the practice in Mesopotamia, and the Ras Shamra texts reveal the widespread practice of polygamy in Ugarit.” Richard M. Davidson, Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson, 2007), 178–180.

David Instone-Brewer recognizes: “Polygamy was allowed in Mosaic law, but there were also caveats such as the warning that kings should not marry too many wives. Polygamy is nowhere spoken of with approval and many passages indicate that monogamy is the ideal (Cf. Is 50:1; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:8; Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10–31; Ps 128:3). There is no evidence that polygamy was widespread in Israel, except perhaps after times of war when the male population was diminished. In the Old Testament, polygamy is almost always related to childlessness and is often associated with problems.” David Instone-Brewer, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 59–60.

Gordon P. Hugenberger, Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 110. Hugenberger notes, “It is a remarkable fact that perhaps the majority of legal texts and marriage documents from Mesopotamia which bear on the question of polygyny authorize it precisely in the exceptional circumstance that one’s wife proves to be infertile. This is not to claim that polygyny was never practiced apart from infertility or sickness.” Ibid, 109–110.

Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg note that the Nuzu tablets they note that “if a woman who is bought as a wife does not produce an heir, she may be obliged by clauses in her marriage contract to supply her husband with another woman. The wife’s position could be protected by a clause to keep the second woman in a servile status to her. The children of the second woman could be protected by a clause forbidding the wife to expel them.” Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, The Bible and the Ancient Near East (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 111.

Ex 21:10–11 says, “If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.” Deut
Andreas Kostenberger contends, “While polygamy was never normative among the followers of Israel’s God, Scripture reveals that it was indeed a recurrent event.”

There are several men in the Old Testament that had multiple wives: Lamech (Gen 4:19); Abraham (Gen 16:3); Esau (Gen 26:34, 28:9); Jacob (Gen 29:30); Gideon (Judg 8:30); Elkanah (1 Sam 1:1–2); David (2 Sam 3:2–5; 5:13); Solomon (1 Kgs 11:30); Ahab (2 Kgs 10:1); Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:15); Ashhur (1 Chron 4:5); Rehoboam (2 Chron 11:21); Abijah (2 Chron 13:21); Jehoram (2 Chron 21:14); and Joash (2 Chron 24:1–3). The Bible does not criticize them for their lifestyle choices. Instead, the Bible states their preferences as a part of life.

Yet, there does seem to be a common problem within a couple of these unions – some type of mistreatment. Bruce Baloian observes, “In polygamist marriages the possibility of one wife’s losing favor with the husband or being less favored was sufficiently common (Gen 29:31, 33; 1 Sam 1:6) that it was addressed in Israel’s legal corpus (Deut 21:15–17).”

Ex 21:10–11 and Deut 21:15–17 are two texts that provide some support for those that found themselves in a

21:15–17 states, “If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, and if the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, that he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the true firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.”

90 Andreas J. Kostenberger, God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 44.

91 David Chapman remarks, “While the earliest marriages in the Old Testament are monogamous, there are nonetheless many famous examples of polygamy in Old Testament narrative (e.g., Jacob, David, and Solomon).” David W. Chapman, “Marriage and Family in Second Temple Judaism,” in Marriage and Family in the Biblical World (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 217.

92 Andreas Kostenberger notes, “The Old Testament reports disruptive favoritism in the polygamous marriages of Jacob (Gen 29:30), Elkanah (1 Sam 1:4–5), and Rehoboam (2 Chron 11:21). In addition, jealousy was a recurrent problem between the competing wives of Abraham (Gen 21:9–10), Jacob (Gen 30:14–16), and Elkanah (1 Sam 1:6).” Kostenberger, God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation, 44.

polygamous union. These texts make concessions for the wives and children who were abused in a polygamous union. Curiously, these two Biblical texts parallel Ancient Near East documents for how to live a polygamous union.

Even though polygamy was not denounced, it was not God's ideal. Polygamy appears to be a manmade concept that attempted to enhance God's ideal union. Yet, instead of enhancing, it detracted from God's ideal and created aberrant behavior.

**Genesis 4:19–24 – Taking Two Wives**

Gen 4:19–24 contains a peculiar narrative of Lamech (Cain's great-great-great grandson). In this account, Lamech takes two wives for himself, one woman was named Adah, and the second woman was named Zillah. Each woman had two children of their own, and these children had their individual lives. Once this information was completed, Lamech sat his two wives before him and told them that he was greater than Cain for a few reasons. One reason that he felt this way was because he responded to the hurt that a young man did to him by retaliating, and killing him. Cain acted out of emotion; Lamech performed volitionally. Thus, if God blessed Cain for his actions, He would bless Lamech greater for his.

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94 Daniel Lowery comments, "Gen 4:17–22 is itself part of the larger pericope which extends through v. 24. 4:17–24 is the second of three units within ch. 4, each beginning with the formulaic man 'knowing (קָרַב) his wife (שָׁבָת) who then 'bears' (יִתְנַה) a son: Gen 4:1, 17, 25. Furthermore, when taken together with the genealogy at the end of the chapter (vv. 25–26), a record of 10 generations is formed, which T. Brodie explains is 'the requisite number for a full genealogy.' C. J. Collins also notes that the chapter begins and ends 'with Eve naming a son and giving an optimistic rationale,' which further demonstrates its literary unity." Daniel D. Lowery, *Toward a Poetics of Genesis 1–11: Reading Genesis 4:17–22 in Its Near Eastern Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 74.
Key Phrase

The key phrase to think through in Gen 4:19–24 is “and took for Lamech two wives” (לָכֵה נַפְשֵׁה לְמָעַח נָשִּׁים). The problem was not that Lamech took a wife; for the notion of taking a wife or a woman is a seeming leitmotif that runs throughout Genesis (4:9; 6:2; 11:29; 12:19; 16:2; 19:14; 20:2–3; 21:21; 24:4, 7, 38, 40, 48; 25:1; 26:34; 28:6 (x2), 9; 34:2, 9, 16; 38:2). The striking thing about this phrase is that Lamech did not take one wife, but he took two wives. The taking of one wife is clearly within the expectation laid out in Gen 2:24. But the notion of taking two wives extends beyond the idea of two individuals becoming “one flesh.” Can three human individuals become “one flesh”? In this narrative of Lamech, where he is comparing himself to and boasting himself over Cain, Lamech’s thought process is revealed – “if one woman is good for other men, then two women are better for me.” Lamech seems to have determined that if Cain had been blessed for taking one wife, he could be blessed even greater if he took for himself two wives. Thus, the possible benefits became appealing to him. So, he took two wives for himself.

Textual Turning Points

Gen 4:19–24 seems to be a textual turning point in the Genesis narrative. Once Lamech is introduced, Cain slides into oblivion.95 Richard Hess notes, “The literary structure of Lamech’s

95 Richard Hess comments, “In the genealogy of Cain, Lamech appears sixth in the sequence. Lamech occurs at the midpoint of an enumeration of twelve different names. Although the names preceding Lamech occur in formulaic style in a linear genealogy, those which follow Lamech appear in a segmented genealogy concerning whose kinship Lamech serves as the central figure. Lamech is husband of Adah and Zillah, and father of Jabal, Jubal, Tubalcaim, and Naamah. Lamech serves as the single genealogical link between the earlier genealogy of v 17 and that of Lamech’s generation in vv 18–24. He alone is mentioned in both. Richard Hess, “Lamech in the Genealogies of Genesis,” Bulletin for Biblical Research 1 (1991): 21.
song, especially the parallelism of subjects in each of the couplets, further demonstrates the position of Lamech as one who brings Cain’s line to an end and who sees the beginning of new lines in his offspring.  

So, there appears to be a paradigm shift taking place.

Most importantly, Cain who sinned against God and humanity through the murder of his brother, brings forth a lineage, namely Lamech, who expands sin into pride, arrogance, and polygamy. Mathews notes, “The first alarming evidence of Lamech’s moral decline is his inauguration of polygamy, a dismal departure from the divine norm (2:23–24).” What Cain had started is doubled with Lamech. He volitionally takes self-gratification to a whole new level.

### Genesis 4:19–24 in the Wake of Research

God provided an ideal plan for man and woman. It was the union between the man and woman that afforded them His blessing. God’s blessing was through propagation. Perhaps, with Lamech, there was a belief that by taking two wives one increased the opportunity for blessing. While polygamy later became a typical way of life in the Ancient Near East. Sarna suggests that “Lamech is apparently the first polygamist, though his two wives are identified only in order to make the following poem intelligible.”

Sailhamer provides greater clarity as he states, “Lamech’s words to his two wives have been interpreted many ways; they are frequently read as an example of a boasting arrogance and rebellion.” Lamech’s arrogance and rebellion, though

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96 Ibid.

97 Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 285. Mathews explains, “Although Genesis does not condemn the patriarchs for their practice of polygamy, it is transparent from Genesis itself that such practices resulted in painful consequences. In Mosaic legislation it was assumed that polygamy produced troubling home life.” Ibid.

98 Sarna, Genesis, 37.

99 John H. Sailhamer, Genesis, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids:
not expressly judged, led to a divergence from God’s standard for the one flesh union. Hamilton states,

Lamech has two wives, Adah and Zillah. Thus 2:24—‘a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife’—becomes ‘. . . shall cleave to his wives.’ To be sure, no rebuke from God is directed at Lamech for his violation of the marital arrangement. It is simply recorded. But that is the case with most Old Testament illustrations of polygamy. Abraham is not condemned for cohabiting with Sarah and Hagar, nor is Jacob for marrying simultaneously Leah and Rachel. In fact, however, nearly every polygamous household in the Old Testament suffers most unpleasant and shattering experiences precisely because of this ad hoc relationship. The domestic struggles that ensue are devastating.100

Waltke, also points out the extension of Lamech’s sin. He writes, “The escalation of sin is now extended to the marital relationship. Polygamy is a rejection of God’s marital plan.”101 Thus, the narrative suggests that Lamech’s desire to deviate from God’s standard of a one flesh union was catastrophic. Kidner notes, “The attempt to improve on God’s marriage ordinance set a disastrous precedent, on which the rest of Genesis is comment enough; . . . its pattern of technical prowess and moral failure is that of humanity.”102

**Genesis 29:15–30 – Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel**

Gen 29:15–30 is similar to Gen 4:19–24 in that Jacob took two wives himself, as had Lamech. However, it is dissimilar in that polygamy was not Jacob’s intent, as was Lamech’s.

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101 Waltke, *Genesis*, 100.

102 Kidner, *Genesis*, 78. Also see, Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 112. Wenham notes that “Genesis 2 pictures the ideal relationship between man and woman may suggest that the author regards monogamy as the norm and that Lamech’s bigamy reflects one aspect of his decline from the creator’s pattern for human life.” Ibid.
Rather, Jacob had his heart set to take Rachel as his wife. However, the custom of the land of Laban, the father of Leah and Rachel, did not permit this happening. Instead, the older daughter, Leah, was to unite with a man before the younger daughter, Rachel, could unite. Therefore, Laban arranged, unbeknownst to Jacob, to have Jacob unite with Leah. Once Jacob learned of the trickery, he fulfilled obligations so that he could also unite with Rachel.

As stated before, the intent of this study is to compare the standard of Genesis 2:24 with various deviations found in Genesis. So, even though the circumstances of Jacob were not of his intention, Genesis clearly points out through the detailed dysfunction of Jacob’s families, that polygamy is still not the ideal. Polygamy violated the intention of the “one flesh” union and brought upon the family a lifetime of complicated issues.

**Key Word**

בּוֶהַ

The key word of importance for this study is בּוֶהַ. The word can be found 251 times in the Old Testament. The word בּוֶהַ means “to like” or “to love.” It can be used in several different ways: God’s love for His chosen people; man’s love for God; love between friends; love

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103 Robert Alden states, “’aheb frequently describes love between human beings. The love of father for son is exemplified by Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22:2) and Israel and Joseph (Gen 37:3). A slave might ‘love’ his master and wish to indenture himself to him for the rest of his life (Ex 21:8). This is the word used in the rule ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ (Lev 19:18). ‘Love’ of the stranger is also incumbent on the faithful (Deut 10:19). Samson had apparently told Delilah that he ‘loved’ her (Judg 14:16; 16:15). Ruth ‘loved’ Naomi her mother-in-law (4:15), Elkanah ‘loved’ his wife Hannah (1 Sam 1:5), and Rebekah ‘loved’ her son Jacob (Gen 25:28). Hiram’s ‘love’ for David illustrates international friendship or irenic politics between the two (1 Kgs 5:1). Notice that nowhere is the love of children toward parents mentioned. Rather, they are to honor, revere, and obey.” Robert L. Alden, “בּוֶהַ,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 14).
between parents and children; love for inanimate objects; and a man’s love for a woman. It is a man’s love for a woman that will be the focus of the following observations of בַּחֵשָׁה.104

While בַּחֵשָׁה has a multitude of expressions, it becomes most significant for this study when it is between a man and woman.105 Isaac’s “love” for Rebekah allowed him to move beyond his mother’s death (Gen 24:67); Samson “loved” Delilah (Judg 16:4) which led to his capture and imprisonment; Michal “loved” David (1 Sam 18:20), before her heart was turned against him.

In these cases above, it can be argued that the Bible is presenting a case that the love experienced by the union between a man and woman is one of intense desire. Yet, that desire is not solely driven by lust. Wallis explains this as he remarks, “In the Old Testament the word בַּחֵשָׁה

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104 There are various ways that the word בַּחֵשָׁה is used in the Old Testament. A master “loves” his servant (Ex 21:5); a father “loves” his son (Gen 22:2); a mother “loves” her son (Gen 25:28); a woman “loves” her mother-in-law (Ruth 4:15); people “love” Jerusalem (Is 66:10); man “loves” the stars (Jer 8:2); man “loves” wealth (Eccl 5:10); man “loves” good days (Ps 34:12); the Lord “loves” justice (Ps 37:28); the Lord “loves” righteousness (Ps 33:5); man “loves” bribes (Is 1:23); man is encouraged “to love” the name of the Lord (Is 56:6); man is urged “to love” the help of the Lord (Ps 40:17; 70:5); man is told “to love” God (Ex 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; Josh 22:5; 23:11; Judg 5:31; 1 Kgs 3:3; Ps 31:24, 38:12; 116:1). P. J. J. S. Els stresses, “Total self-entrusting and faithful love for God is at the heart of what the Old Testament regards as genuine piety and a love that necessarily includes an attitude of gratitude (Deut 8:1–10; Josh 22:4; cf. 24:1–18; 1 Sam 12 7–11; 1 Chron 16:7–36; 29:13); trust (Gen 15:6; Deut 10:12; 1 Sam 14:6; 2 Sam 24:14), and consistent solidarity (hesed). Abraham, called ‗cherche yhwh, the friend of Yahweh, on account of his intimate relationship with God, is seen as the model of piety (Is 41:8; cf. 2 Chron 20:7).” P. J. J. S. Els, “בַּחֵשָׁה,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 286. In addition, man is told “to love” God’s commandments (Ps 119:48); God “loves” Israel (Hos 3:1) Wallis comments, “Hosea manifested a new understanding of God’s relationship to his people and of their response to his deeds. We cannot know for certain whether some of Hosea’s predecessors held this same interpretation. Perhaps the concept of Yahweh’s covenant with the people of Israel provided the impetus for the idea of a marital bond between Yahweh and his people. However, marriage is also understood as a covenant (→ בְּרִית b’rith, Mal 2:14). Here, this concept is not understood as sacral, but as civil. It is worthy of note that Hosea’s use of the concept of love to express his understanding of God’s nature reflects the original meaning of the word ‗ahabh as love between husband and wife.” Gerhard Wallis, “בַּחֵשָׁה,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 113.

105 Jenni points out that “the primary human love relationship is that between man and woman (in 2 Sam 1:26 termed ‘אֱֹהֶבּ הַשָּׁמָשׁ ‘the love of women,’ is comparison to the love of friends): Isaac-Rebekah (Gen 24:67), Jacob-Rachel (29:18, 20, 30, 32), Shechem-Dinah (34:3), Samson-the Philistine woman (Judg 14:16), Samson-Delilah (16:4, 15), Elkanah-Hannah (1 Sam 1:5), David-Michal (18:20, 28), Amnon-Tamar (2 Sam 13:1, 4, 15), Solomon-many foreign women; in addition to Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kgs 11:1f.), Rehoboam-Maachah (2 Chron 11:21), Ahasuerus-Esther (Esth 2:17).” Jenni, “בַּחֵשָׁה,” 47.
is used when referring to sexual love, although a different word (→ עֲדָה yadhā’) is used for the act of sexual intercourse itself. Thus the emphasis suggested by the word ‘ahabh is not really on sexual love, but more on experiencing and desiring love.”

Although הבּ and הבּ both have an meaning of an intense experiential desire as found between the man and the woman, it was catastrophic when a man attempted to love two at one time. Els insists,

Love is destined to lead to grief when several rival wives belong to one man, especially when he prefers one above the other. This may end up in an unhappy state of affairs of which we have several examples in the Old Testament (2 Chron 11:21). In the final analysis the husband’s preference would not necessarily be because a particular wife was blessed with a greater number of children, but in spite of her barrenness. In such cases a regular theme is the fact that Yahweh, who alone determines fertility, would compensate the unloved wife (ֱֶעָנָא) for her loveless plight by blessing her with children; examples are the tension between Sarah and Hagar after Ishmael’s birth (Gen 16: 21:9–14); Jacob-Rachel-Leah (Gen 30), and Elkanah-Hannah-Peninnah (1 Sam 1). For this very reason ANE and Old Testament lawgivers considered it necessary to establish specific laws to protect the children of a wife who is less loved (Deut 21:15–17).

It can be argued that love was designed to be regulated or controlled by an individual. Wallis notes, “It is disastrous when one does not control his love emotion, but in unbridled passion acts in way contrary to genuine love, thus hurting the one he loves and transgressing the

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108 Wallis, “בּ,” 108. Els goes further by writing: “A number of instances where ’hb expresses male love for a female portray how disastrous it could be when a person does not control his emotions of love, but in unbridled passion acts in a manner contrary to genuine love, thus lusting after the one whom he loves and so transgressing the (Israelite) law of chastity. One such example is the narrative of Shechem and Dinah. . . . He later states that “having unchaste relations with an immoral person and/or prostitute is wrong. Such sexual relations are clearly portrayed as being the opposite of genuine satisfying heterosexual love; and the very deceitfulness of such an immoral woman’s seemingly attractive offers is poignantly highlighted when she dares to call such illicit sex, love (Prov 7:18), when the very parallelism of ’habim with dodim reveals the semantic content of ’hb here to be mere physical sexual gratification and nothing more. That such illicit erotic activities are not merely socially and psychologically damaging but religiously condemnable is evident.” Els, “בּ,” 292–293.
law of chastity. Amnon, filled with passionate sensual desire, overpowers his unsuspecting half-sister Tamar as she cares for him with all good intentions and concern, and after he has disgraced her he drives her away and refuses to marry her (2 Sam 13:1–19).\textsuperscript{109} In this text, Jacob’s love and desire for Rachel was so strong, that he was willing to serve a total of fourteen years for her. This deep love caused him to step beyond the divine intention of a “one flesh” union.

**Key Phrases**

In addition to the words above, there are several key phrases in Gen 29:15–30 that should be mentioned. These various phrases seem to provide a comprehension of Jacob’s attitude toward Laban after he had served Laban for seven years for the hand of Rachel. The phrases to be examined are: “give me” (יָֽשָׁבַה); “caused her to go to him” (יָֽשָׁבַה); “what have you done to me?” (יָֽשָׁבַה). When these phrases are considered together, one is able to gain some insight into the disregard that Jacob had for the customs of the land, Laban, or Leah. Jacob loved Rachel, and wanted to be united to her. His regard was not about the traditions of the land or the appearance of Laban. In addition, Jacob was not concerned with Leah or her feelings. His love was for Rachel and he would do whatever was necessary to gain her as his wife.

This can be illustrated within the text. After seven years of service to Laban, Jacob was ready to obtain his reward. According to Mathews, the first phrase (“give me”), implies that Jacob has served Laban for seven years and now he is an “impatience and perhaps frustrated” man.\textsuperscript{110} He wanted Rachel as he wife. However, Laban prearranged a feast to commemorate the

\textsuperscript{109} Wallis, “בָּהַי,” 108.

occasion. He, also, replaced Leah for Rachel, and perhaps got Jacob intoxicated so he did not realize the exchange. But, it was Jacob’s impatience that allowed him to become fooled. Thus, Laban “caused her (Leah) to go to him.”\textsuperscript{111} Mathews states that this phrase “commonly refers to marriage and/or sexual relations. Once Jacob engages in sexual relations with the virgin Leah, the action is irrevocable, requiring Jacob to fulfill his honorable duty to the woman.”\textsuperscript{112} An exasperated Jacob proclaimed: “what have you done to me?”\textsuperscript{113} Mathews maintains, “Jacob’s complaint echoes the protests of Pharaoh and Abimelech when duped by Abraham and Isaac: ‘What have you done?’ (12:18; 20:9; 26:10; cf. Ex 14:11; Jonah 3:14). God utters similar language when he censures the snake (‘you have done this,’ 3:14) and condemns Cain (‘What have you done?’ 4:10). Jacob’s outrage also reverberates Rebekah’s warning concerning Esau’s anger because of what ‘you [Jacob] did to him’ (27:45).”\textsuperscript{114} The language of Jacob was a verbal communication of exhaustion and frustration. His love was toward Rachel, and not Leah. Jacob expected to receive Rachel, but became the victim of an outrageous act of deceit. Rather than appealing to God or other civil authorities to solve the problem, Jacob simply accepted Laban’s

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113} Waltke observes, “By befuddling Jacob with wine and using the blindness of the bridal veil and the darkness of night, Laban pulls off his deception, just as his sister had deceived Isaac with hairy skin, the smell of clothing, and tasty stew.” Waltke, \textit{Genesis}, 405.

\textsuperscript{114} Mathews, \textit{Genesis 11:27–50:26}, 470. Hamilton notes, “Even if Laban is legally correct, why did he not inform Jacob of that custom before the feast? Would not such a disclosure have prevented any such furor as has erupted here? Is it possible that Laban was actually surprised by Jacob’s protest? Does he believe for technical reasons that Jacob must first marry Leah, whether he wants to or not, and then he may have Rachel? Not that the expression Laban uses to justify himself and his substitution is, ‘It is not customary in our place . . .’ (lo’ ye’aseh ken). This expression refers to serious violations of custom that threaten the fabric of society and is tantamount to rebuke. Thus Abimelech uses this phrase with Abraham after Abraham deceives him (20:9). Likewise, the sons of Jacob use this phrase after they hear about their sister’s violation (34:7). Tamar, daughter of David, attempted to dissuade her half-brother Amnon from forcing himself on her by appealing to the force of this expression (2 Sam 13:12).” Hamilton, \textit{The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50}, 263.
terms. His deep love for Rachel propelled him to act against the prescribed, divine intent found in Gen 2:24.

**Genesis 29:15–30 in Summation**

After a long journey and seven years of labor, Jacob must have felt that he had completed his task of gaining a wife. It is understandable that he was ready to gain his reward. Instead, Jacob was duped. The fact that it was his own kin probably exacerbated the situation. Westermann explains the horror of the experience. He states, “The narrator seeks to show that transactions within a family can lead to new relationships in which work, performance, and reward take on increased significance. In Laban’s case, what had been conduct governed by the ethics of family relationships turns into that of a man pursing his own advantage, whose only purpose is to get maximum benefit from Jacob’s labor.”

Undoubtedly, Laban must have known how attracted Jacob was to Rachel; for he used it to his benefit. Wenham illuminates the situation as he observes, “What is surprising is the price he [Jacob] was prepared to pay for her.

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115 Mathews states, “Laban mentions their relationship first, referring to his familial obligation toward Jacob.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 466. Yet, Laban does not fulfill his familial obligations. Wenham shares a possible justification for Laban’s actions as he notes that “in the light of Jacob’s very precise request to marry ‘Rachel, your younger daughter,’ it may be no coincidence that Laban never names the daughter he intends to give to Jacob. Maybe he was keeping his options open, perhaps hoping that someone else would come along to marry Leah before Jacob had completed his service.” Wenham, *Genesis*, 16–50, 235. It is interesting that Leah and Rachel “are identified and distinguished according to their relative ages, their names, and their relative beauty.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 467.

116 Westermann, *Genesis*, 206. Waltke insists, “What Laban should have done as a loving relative is to help Jacob get a start on building his own home, as Jacob asks of Laban in 30:25–34 (esp. vv. 26, 30, 33). Instead, Laban keeps Jacob as nothing more than a laborer under contract, as Jacob bitterly complains in 31:38–42.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 404.
[Rachel’s] hand, seven years labor, undoubtedly indicating the intensity of his affection for her.” 117 Jacob’s affection for Rachel were dictated by his love. 118

Jacob was willing to pay whatever it took to have Rachel as his wife. 119 He was agreeable even to work a total of fourteen years for Laban in order to acquire the hand of Rebekah. But that intense love also created Jacob’s disregard for God’s standard of a “one flesh” union. The absolute dysfunction that occurred within Jacob’s families in the narratives that follow are clear evidence of the catastrophic results of trying to love two instead of one. 120

**Genesis 26:34–35 – Esau Marries Hittite Wives**

Gen 26:34–35 is peculiar because there is no rhythm or reason for Esau’s actions. These two verses simple state that when Esau was forty years old, and he married two women from two different families. His actions grieved his parents.

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117 Wenham, *Genesis, 16–50*, 235. Wenham notes, “In the ancient Near East, betrothal was effected by paying a ḫāmîm, ‘marriage present,’ ‘bride price.’ This was essentially a capital transfer by the groom’s family to the brides’ family pledging the man to marry. The Old Testament fixes the maximum marriage gift at fifty shekels (Deut 22:29), but typically the gifts were much lower.” Ibid.

118 Wallis maintains, “Love that is not consciously aware of the importance of behavior, but strives only to enjoy life without any self-restraint, must inevitably lead to complications and is to be rejected. Even where it is not explicitly stated, this ethical dimension of love in the Old Testament is quite clear, as in the man’s marital love for and fidelity to his barren wife. . . . Love is destined to lead to grief when several rival wives belong to one man, and when he prefers one above the others (2 Chron 11:21).” Wallis, “בָּשָׂם,” 108–109.

119 Baldwin contends, “Such a sum was a guarantee of serious intention and a check on fleeting attachments, as well as a deterrent to easy divorce.” Baldwin, *The Message of Genesis 12–50*, 122.

120 Hamilton contends, “His relationship to Rachel must be akin to Joseph’s relationship to Mary in the New Testament. The couple are husband and wife, but the marriage has not yet been physically consummated. This is clear from Jacob’s words to Laban. . . . Jacob’s expressed desire is not for marriage, but for sexual congress on the heels of marriage.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50*, 261. Hamilton explains this idea as he states that Jacob “does not say, ‘let me have Rachel so that I may take her as my wife.’ He says: ‘Let me have my wife. . . . that I may go in to her, i.e., have sexual intercourse with her.’” Ibid.
The intent of this survey is to explore the word הָרֶם. It is used in the Old Testament, and it means “bitterness.” Yet, it is used in Gen 26:35 with the thought of disappointment. Victor Hamilton notes that הָרֶם is used in this manner “expressing Isaac’s chagrin at Esau’s decision to marry Hittite women.” Gary Smith assists in explaining the word הָרֶם was used figuratively in Gen 26:35. He contends that the bitterness being described “is an inner emotional feeling of deep sorrow or an outwardly directed anger that cries out to the power that seems to be causing the problem.” Isaac and Rebekah were grieved because of the decision that Esau made in marrying two Hittite women. Helmer Ringgren adds as he remarks that the idea behind the word הָרֶם is a “bitter taste that evokes a negative emotional response.” Smith contends, “Generally,

121 Gary V. Smith, “הָרֶם,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1110. Smith defines הָרֶם: ‘The literal use of ‘bitter’ applies to the sour taste of wormwood (Prov 5:4; Lam 3:15) or bitter herbs (maror, Exod 12:8; Num 9:11) eaten at the Passover. The bitter herbs reminded the Israelites of the bitter experience of slavery in Egypt, from which God delivered them (Exod 1:14). God tested the faith of the children of Israel at the waters of Marah, which had a bitter, brackish taste, the opposite of sweet (Exod 15:23, 25; cf. Prov 27:7; Is 5:20, where bitter is contrasted to sweet). In the day of God’s judgment even strong drink will have a bitter taste to it (Is 24:9).’


123 Smith, “הָרֶם,” 1110. Smith notes, “Severe mourning, complaining, and wailing were ways of expressing a person’s emotional unhappiness.” As a point of note, Smith advises how the word is used figuratively by stating: “The figurative sense of bitterness is associated with: (a) the misery of the ruthless forced labor that the Egyptians required of Israel (Exod 1:14); (b) biting, angry words of complaint caused by suffering and God’s seemingly unjust treatment of someone who was righteous (Job 7:11; 23:2); (c) the enraged emotional agony and uncontrollable crying caused by childlessness (1 Sam 3:10); (d) miserable or distressing circumstances of life that cannot be changed (Gen 26:35; Job 9:18); or (e) the death of a favorite or only child (Gen 37:34; 1 Sam 30:6; 2 Kgs 4:27; Zech 12:10) or the inevitable premature death of innocent people in the near future (Esth 4:1; Is 38:17).

124 Helmer Ringgren, “הָרֶם,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 16. He explains why this is significance by writing: “Therefore, mar is frequently used figuratively for feelings and emotions.”
bitterness or emotional sorrow is not regarded as sin. However, when one rejects the sovereign plan of God for his or her life and responds in bitterness and anger against God, this is wrong behavior.125 Esau did two things wrong: 1) he married Hittite women; 2) he married two women. Neither of these choices were God’s ideal.

**Key Phrase**

The key phrase for this passage is רוח רע (“bitterness of spirit”). The literal notion behind the words רוח רע is “bitterness of spirit.” Sarna indicates that the narrator seems to want to be expansive with this phrase. He notes, “There may be ironic word play here, for the name of Judith is connected with the verb ‘to praise’ and Basemath has to do with ‘fragrance.’”126 Waltke furthers Sarna’s notion along as he writes, “We may infer that the Hittites’ lifestyle radically differed from the holy family’s spiritual tastes and training.”127 Even though time has erased the original meaning, one can assemble enough information to understand Isaac and Rebekah’s displeasure.128 Wenham expounds on this as he states, “The phrase ‘bitterness of spirit’ occurs only here, but it seems akin to רוח רע ‘bitter in soul.’ Which denotes an intense anguish such as

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125 Smith, “בורה,” 1111.

126 Sarna, *Genesis*, 189.


128 Naomi Steinberg insists, “Esau married outside the direct line of Israelites suggests that 26:34–35 describes events that will make it impossible for Esau to have a place in the Terahite genealogy. The narrator’s report that Esau’s Hittite wives made life bitter for Rebekah and Isaac provides us with further data regarding marriage choices appropriate for the heir to Isaac’s vertical lineage.” Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis*, 96.
Hannah and Job experienced (1 Sam 1:10; Job 7:11; 10:1)."\textsuperscript{129} It appears that Esau’s decision to marry outside of the family, and to take two wives was a horrendous act for Isaac and Rebekah.

\textbf{Textual Turning Points}

There appears to be the textual turning point within these two verses. The belief for this verdict is that it seems odd why this information is placed here in the text. Hamilton might have the solution as he notes, “Is Esau’s relationship with Judith and Basemath to be contrasted with Isaac’s relationship with Abimelech? Alliances of a political nature with outsiders are condoned, but marital alliances with outsiders bring grief to the husband’s parents.”\textsuperscript{130} Waltke contends that “Esau has broken with the accepted patriarchal practice by contracting his own marriages.”\textsuperscript{131} Again, there seems to be an explicit purpose that Esau as the eldest son was to follow. But, Esau does not appear to have any regard for the manner that God used Abraham to bring his parents together. Abraham brought Rebekah to Isaac when he was forty years old (Gen 25:20).\textsuperscript{132} The text states that Esau was forty when he took wives for himself. Isaac and Rebekah were grieved for their inability to find Esau a mate. The narrator seems to indicate this as he notes that the two women that Esau united with were Hittite. By doing this Esau abandoned God’s ideal union, and the way to initiate it.

\textsuperscript{129} Wenham, \textit{Genesis 16–50}, 205.

\textsuperscript{130} Hamilton, \textit{The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50}, 210.

\textsuperscript{131} Waltke, \textit{Genesis}, 375.

\textsuperscript{132} Jed Abraham asserts, "Isaac, whose father Abraham had arranged for him an acceptable marriage to a kinswoman (Gen 24), neglected to do the same for his own son. In tending to his activities in the field, Isaac shirked his responsibility for the affairs of the tent." Jed H. Abraham, “Esau’s Wives,” \textit{Jewish Bible Quarterly} 25/4 (1997): 256.
The decisions that one makes in life have consequences in the future. Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to be his wife (Gen 25:20). Esau was forty when he took his wives. However, the difference between father and son, was that Isaac followed the directives of his father, while Esau did not. As a result, Isaac’s wife, Rebekah, brought comfort to him (Gen 24:67). Esau, on the other hand, took for himself Hittite women to be his wives. And, Esau’s wives brought “bitterness of spirit” to Isaac and Rebekah. There was a difference between father and son on both occasions. Mathews contends that Gen 26:34–35 provides a clear image: “This brief notice provides compelling evidence that Esau’s attitude toward his family’s religious heritage is deficient.” Sarna explains the deficiency as he contends that Esau “commits a threefold offense: breaking with social convention by contracting the marriage himself rather than leaving the initiative to his parents; abandoning the established practice of endogamy by marrying outside the kinship group; and violating the honor of his clan by intermarrying with the native women.” Keil and Delitzsch note how Esau’s marrying native women was a violation to his parents. The variance between father and son appears to be in that Esau’s assertive behavior was due to his reluctance to wait on his father to provide for him.


134 Sarna, Genesis, 189.

135 Keil and Delitzsch state, “They became ‘bitterness of spirit,’ the cause of deep trouble, to his parents, viz. on account of their Canaanitish character, which was so opposed to the vocation of the patriarchs; whilst Esau, by these marriages furnished another proof, how thoroughly his heart was set upon earthly things.” Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 273.
Waltke notes, “Profane Esau shows his disregard for Abraham’s God-given vision to sanctify the earth through his offspring.”

Summary

This section was written to survey the phrases of Gen 4:19–24; Gen 29:15–30; Gen 26:34–35, and the key words of Gen 29:15–30 and Gen 26:34–35 in light of Gen 2:24. Upon the earlier consideration of Gen 2:24, it was established that Gen 2:24 provides the foundation of the ideal union between the man and the woman of unity and solidarity. These texts show examples of polygamy stemming from a defiant love: Lamech’s self-love, Jacob’s intense love for Rachel, and Esau’s love of his way over that of his parents. Each of these cases, Lamech’s boastful self-love, Jacob’s unbridled love for Rachel, and Esau’s love of his way instead of his parents led to deviations from the “one flesh” union. Thus, Gen 4:19–24, Gen 29:15–30, and Gen 26:34–35 can be comprehended as a challenge to the prescription of divine intention.

Polygamy Due to Barrenness

Gen 2:24 provides the premise of a “one flesh” relationship. A man and a woman were brought together to create a family. However, there were occasions when the couple of a “one flesh” union were not able to produce a child. When this happened, the woman used her maid, if

136 Waltke, Genesis, 375. Waltke elaborates by stating: “Esau cannot be censured for his bigamy. Although bigamy was not the Creator’s ideal for marriage, Old Testament saints often had more than one wife (e.g., 25:1). Moreover, he cannot be censured for exogamy (i.e., marrying outside the kin group), since other saints, such as Salmon who married the Canaanite prostitute Rahab and Boaz who married Ruth, abandoned endogamy. However, as a son of Abraham, Esau is without excuse in marrying Hittites who are listed among the wicked Canaanites. He should have known that God condemned these people for their wickedness and would eventually give Abraham’s offspring their land. He must have known how solicitously his grandfather acted to prevent his father from marrying these women (24:3). By marrying these women without regard to his ancestor’s initiative and benediction, Esau again signals his lack of commitment to the Abrahamic vision of Israel’s destiny and so his unworthiness to receive the blessing.” Ibid., 375–376.
she had one, as a provision to allow her husband the opportunity for a descendant. This section appraises a union that diverted from the ideal even though circumstances encouraged a union of polygamy. As already noted, the divine intent was for a man and a woman to be one flesh even when barrenness occurred. This section examines Gen 16:1–16 which details a union of polygamy due to barrenness.

**Genesis 16:1–16 – Abram, Sarai, and Hagar**

Gen 16:1 states that Sarai was not able to have children. However, Sarai had a maidservant whom she believed could produce a child. As a consequence, Sarai instructed Abram to take Hagar as his wife. Abram complied, and Hagar gave birth to a son. Yet, when Hagar conceived, it angered Sarai to the point that she despised Hagar. Sarai went to Abram, and accused Abram and Hagar of doing wrong against her. Abram told Sarai that Hagar was her maidservant to do with as she pleased. Sarai drove Hagar away from them. Yet, the angel of the Lord came to Hagar, and told her to return and submit to her mistress. The angel of the Lord informed her that she was with child. The angel stated that this child would be a wild man in whom all people would be against.

**Key Words**

The first word to be evaluated is הָעַבָּדָה. It means “maidservant” or “maid.” The implication of הָעַבָּדָה states that the woman was not an ordinary “maidservant” or “maid.”

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But, she was an exclusive companion to a wife, who assisted in all of the daily activities of the wife.\textsuperscript{138}

The various places of the Old Testament that πηρα is used are as follows: \textsuperscript{139} Hagar was the “maid” of Sarai (Gen 16:1, 3, 6, 8); Ishmael was Abraham’s son from Hagar the “maid” of Sarai (Gen 25:12); Laban gave Zilpah to Leah to be her “maid,” and he gave Bilhah to Rachel to be her “maid” (Gen 29:24, 29); Rachel and Leah gave Jacob their “maids” to be his wives so they could bear children for them (Gen 30:4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 18); Dan and Naphtali were the sons of Bilhah the “maidservant” of Rachel (Gen 35:25) Gad and Asher were the sons of Zilpah the “maidservant” of Leah (Gen 25:26); Moses stated that the first born of the female “maids” would die (Ex 11:5); Abigail declared that she was a “maidservant” of David once he took her as his wife soon after Nabal, her husband, died (1 Sam 25:41); a female “maidservant” was a messenger for David (2 Sam 17:17); the eyes of a “maidservant” look to her mistress for direction (Ps 123:2); the earth is troubled when a “maidservant” replaces her mistress (Prov 30:23).

\textsuperscript{138} Austel comments, “The shipha ‘maid,’ was a slave who could be given as a gift to a daughter when she married (Gen 29:24, 29). Pharaoh presented Abraham gifts, including maidservants. Though the word seems to have had a wider use in the sense of ‘female slave’ generally, those who are mentioned as individuals in the Old Testament are personal maids-in-waiting to a married woman. According to Nuzi law, a sterile wife could give her maid to her husband so that she might vicariously bear a child through her (Gen 16:2ff; 30:3–4). A boy born of such a union could become the heir unless the wife herself later bore a son.” Austel, “πηρα,” 947.

\textsuperscript{139} E. Reuter advises, “There are 60 occurrences of sipha in the Old Testament. We may note a concentration in Gen 12–35 (26 times), 2 Sam 14 (6 times), and Jer 34 (6 times).” E. Reuter, “πηρα,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 406.
The word הַסִּפָּה had a specific role. Her responsibility was to be a deputized mistress for her mistress. One overarching feature behind הַסִּפָּה, is that a sipha was not to be considered a slave, but an extension of her mistress. But, the הַסִּפָּה was socially not to be from a class higher than the wife. Part of the reason was that if the wife could not have children (or not enough children), the הַסִּפָּה had the duty to become a surrogate wife to the wife’s husband. Thus, a הַסִּפָּה was to be an unmarried, virgin female so that she could fulfill her role (Ex 11:5; Lev 19:20).

E. Reuter assists one’s understanding of the role of the sipha as he notes, “Eleven texts (Gen 12:16; 20:14; 24:35; 30:43; 32:6; Deut 28:68; 1 Sam 8:16; 2 Kgs 5:26; Jer 34:11; Eccl 2:7; 2 Chron 28:10) use sipha in syndesis with ‘ebed. From this usage we may conclude that the sipha is an unfree female dependent of comparable status.”

140 Richard Schultz informs, “The maidservant usually serves the woman of the household more directly and thus is used with mistress (גֶּבֶר, Gen 16:4, 8, 9; Ps 123:2; Prov 30:23: Isa 24:2) more often than with master. This relationship is primary; thus Hagar remains Sarah’s maidservant even after being given to Abraham as a sexual partner (Gen 16:5).” Richard Schultz, “סִפָּה,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 212.

141 Ibid.

142 Reuter, “סִפָּה,” 407. Reuter instructs, “The formula of transfer, using ntn and lqh, normally assigned to the bride’s father, is here pronounced by the primary wife. The status of the sipha with respect to the primary wife does not change; Hagar’s attempt to make Sarai feel inferior because of her infertility leads Sarai to treat her harshly (Gen 16:4–6). A child conceived under such an arrangement is considered the mistress’s child (16:2; 30:3). The mistress often chooses the child’s name. The natural children of the primary wife, however, are treated preferentially.” Ibid., 407–408.

143 Reuter, “סִפָּה,” 406. Reuter comments, “It is noteworthy that the sipha always belongs to her mistress. Even when running away, Hagar is still defined by her relationship to Sarai (Gen 16:8–9) and is therefore ordered to return to Sarai, not to Abram (v. 9). This association is especially clear in the consistent use of the enclitic personal pronoun and in construct phrases where sipha is the nomen regens and the matriarch the nomen rectum. To outsiders the patriarch has ownership of the sipha; within the family, however, she is assigned to the wife. Thus when a daughter is married, her dowry may include a sipha, who then goes over, along with the bride, to the extended family of the bridegroom (Gen 29:24).” Ibid., 407.
In light of Gen 16:1–16, Hagar was the ḥāwāʾ. She was a higher status than other servants, but was in no way supposed to be considered a higher status than Sarai. However, once Hagar conceived Abraham’s child, Sarai seems to have believed that Hagar’s status had surpassed her own.

The second word of this report is qwx/ḵāḇēṯ. The word qwx is used in only a few places in the Old Testament. Within these verses, qwx means “hollow,” “bosom,” “bottom,” or “embrace.” Yet, for this passage, the word qwx is used in the context of “bosom” in the sense of “embracing.”

The notion behind the word qwx produces the idea of sexual intimacy in some unique sense. Andrew Bowling explains this idea as he states, “Giving into the bosom is a euphemism for sexual relations (Gen 16:5).” Some examples of qwx are: Hagar lay in Abraham’s qwx and became pregnant (Gen 16:5); A young, virgin woman was to be brought to David so that she

144 G. Andre defines: “Bosom, lap: In the sense of ‘bosom’ or ‘lap,’ cheq is used to refer to sexual relationship. The phrase ‘esheth cheq means ‘wife’ (Deut 13:7; 28:54), and ‘ish cheq means ‘husband’ (Deut 28:56). The word is also used to describe an intimate but nonsexual relationship, especially between mother and child (1 Kgs 3:20; 17:19; Lam 2:12). When Naomi lays the child in her cheq (Ruth 4:16f.), we may be dealing with an adoption ceremony. In Nathan’s parable in 2 Sam 12, the poor man’s lamb lay in his cheq and was like a daughter to him (v.3; cf. v. 8). The parental image appears again in Num 11:12, where Yahweh commands Moses to carry the people in his cheq as a nurse carries a sucking child. The image of Yahweh as a shepherd, carrying the lambs in his cheq, in the bulge of his garment at his chest, both expresses the notion of solicitude and says that the return from exile is meant for every single individual (Is 40:11; cf. 40:26; 43:7).” G. Andre, “qwx,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 357.

145 Andrew Bowling, “ḵāḇēṯ,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 273. Bowling states, “A variety of abstract, figurative ideas are expressed by this term. Family intimacy may be emphasized (Deut 28:54; Mic 7:5). Tender care or concern may be expressed as in the poor man’s care for his only sheep (2 Sam 12:8), the widow’s care for her sick son (1 Kgs 17:19), and God’s carrying his people in his bosom (Is 40:11). Giving the old king’s wives into the new king’s bosom showed the new king’s authority (2 Sam 12:8; cf. also 2 Sam 16:20–23). Naomi formally laid Ruth’s child ‘in her bosom’ as a symbol that this child was her (and her husband’s) legitimate heir (Ruth 4:16). The ‘bosom’ like other physical terms (e.g. ‘bones,’ ‘kidneys,’ and ‘heart’) may serve as an emphatic, intimate term for the person himself.” Ibid.
could "warmth" and bring warmth to him (1 Kgs 1:2); Israel was warned not to trust the one that lie in her cheq (Mic 7:5); Nathan chastened David for having been in the “bosom” of Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:8); the “bosom” of a man cannot protect his wife against God’s judgment (Deut 28:54, 56); "bosom" is used to note the infatuation with an alien woman (Prov 5:20).

This brief discussion discloses the word "bosom" as one where the “bosom” brings comfort and/or for the purpose of a sexual encounter. Abram went to Hagar, and they embraced so that they conceived. Sarai because of their actions felt threatened and inferior to Hagar. She exclaims, “My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me” (Gen 16:5).

The third word to be examined is "violence." Yet, does not imply ordinary “violence.” The term hamas specifies a willful act of a person to do harm against another person. Ignatius Swart develops the term by suggesting that the acts of violence expressed by hamas are carried out toward an individual, but are also aimed at God. Hence, the

146 Laird Harrison states that “the noun and verb together has most translators satisfied with the word ‘violence’ in some form. It may be noted, however, that the word hamas in the OT is used almost always in connection with sinful violence.” R. Laird Harrison, “ḥamma,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 297. Ignatius Swart helps define physical and psychological violence by stating: “First, violence is an act of murder, destruction, and abuse by a defined group of individuals (that is, personal enemies) against another individual or individuals (Gen 49:5; Judg 9:24; 1 Chron 12:17; Ps 7:16; 11:5; 25:19; 27:12; 35:11; 74:20; 140:1, 4, 11). In the Psalms the act or threat of hamas also clearly evokes psychological anguish within the victim. Second, it is an act of destruction, murdering, and plundering a nation or nations by another nation of the ANE (Jer 51:46; Hab 1:9; 2:8, 17), especially when the violence is committed against God’s people. On the one hand God used the violence of nations to carry out his judgment on his sinful people (Jer 13:22; 20:8; Lam 2:6; Ezek 7:11), but on the other hand he will avenge the violence done to his people (Jer 51:35; Joel 3:19; Obad 10). Third, physical violence, thus, can go as far as the physical destruction of the enemy or other person, so that hamas can take on the meaning of ‘bloodshed’ (Gen 49:5).” Ignatius Swart, “ḥamma,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 178.
actions of the one committing *hamas* elicit God’s judgment.\textsuperscript{147} H. J. Stoebe specifies this definition as he remarks, “Religious and a profane usage may not be strictly distinguished because *hamas*, even if interpersonal actions violate an order established or guaranteed by God.”\textsuperscript{148}

It becomes useful to see how the Old Testament uses the word *hamas*. Some examples of *hamas* are: God regretted having created man because of his “violence” (Gen 6:11); Sarai claimed that “violence” was committed against her (Gen 16:5); hatred is characterized by “violence” (Ps 25:19; 27:12); Proverbs notes that “violence” conceals the mouth of the wicked (Prov 10:6, 11); Proverbs contends that the soul of the unfaithful feeds on “violence” (Prov 13:2); God asserts that He hates divorce because of the “violence” it creates (Mal 2:16).\textsuperscript{149}

Sarai maintained that violence had been committed against her. However, it was Sarai who acted harshly against Hagar after she embraced Abram. The union between a man and woman was not ideally meant to be shared with other people. Yet, Sarai shared Hagar with

\textsuperscript{147} Swart contends, “God’s judgment is carried out without human intervention on the basis of his holiness and righteousness.” Swart, “שמית קמה,” 179. Haag asserts, “According to the secular tradition of Israel (see Gen 4:9–12 and Ex 22:26), *hamas* as social crime, unjust judgment, and above all bloodguilt is directed ultimately against Yahweh and provokes his judgment, without human intervention.” Haag, “שמית קמה,” 485.

\textsuperscript{148} H. J. Stoebe, “שמית קמה,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 437. Stoebe later elaborates, “*Hamas* may indeed have originally meant the misdeed that objectively burdens the land and disturbs its relationship and its inhabitants’ relationship to God, so that anyone who knows of it must appear as plaintiff before the legal community in order to divert the consequences. . . . If the land is full of *hamas*, then the consequence for its inhabitants is punishment and destruction.” Ibid., 438.

\textsuperscript{149} Swart considers, “The topic of affliction or oppression, which includes a wide range of concepts such as hurt, injury, oppression, violence, wrong, is expressed by a significant number of Hebrew words. It occurs broadly on two levels. First, there is affliction at an international level, viz., of a weaker nation by a powerful nation. This form of affliction contributes to the theme of OT salvation history when it is used by God to punish the unfaithfulness of Israel and make them an obedient people. Second, there is affliction within the community, viz., social injustice perpetrated by a certain group in society, but also including individual acts inflicted on one’s fellow human being.” Swart, “שמית קמה,” 177.
Abram because Sarai had not been able to provide Abram with an heir. She acted in a manner that was contrary to the ideal, which caused her to feel violated.

**Key Phrase**

The goal of this section is to discuss the phrase “I shall be built up” – נֶבֶן. Sarai had not fulfilled her part of producing Abraham an heir. As a result of her misfortune, Sarai decided to give her sipha to be Abraham’s wife as an heir producer. George Van Pelt Campbell argues that Sarai’s “plan was that by Hagar having a child Sarai might be ‘built up’ through her. The verb ‘built up’ (בָּנָה) is ‘an obvious word-play’ on the term for ‘son’ (בֶּן).” Since Hagar was an extension of Sarai, Hagar’s child would in effect be building up Sarai’s house.

**Genesis 16:1–16 in the Wake of Research**

What seems strange to one culture, is a norm for another culture. In the beginning, God explicitly told Adam that he was “to be fruitful and multiply.” Thus, he had an obligation to meet before God. Yet, the manner that he was to provide progeny was by means of a spouse. This idea seems to create a notion that there is a certain order that is required for man to accomplish his

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150 Wenham notes, “It was a serious matter for a man to be childless in the ancient world, for it left him without an heir. But it was even more calamitous for a woman; to have a great brood of children was a mark of success as a wife; to have none was ignominious failure.” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 7.

151 Wenham advises that “throughout the ancient East polygamy was resorted to as a means of obviating childlessness. But wealthier wives preferred the practice of surrogate motherhood, whereby they allowed their husbands to ‘go in to’ (יָצַה נְכָה) their maids, a euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf. 6:4; 30:3; 38:8, 9; 39:14). The mistress could then feel that her maid’s child was her own and exert some control over it in a way that she could not if her husband simply took a second wife.” Ibid.


purpose. According to the cultural norms of that day, a father of a son had to choose (to pay a dowry), to another father for his daughter. If the woman could not fulfill her promise to the man she was viewed as a reprehensible failure. The reason that she would be viewed as a failure happened because of a twofold belief system. First, a man gave a dowry expecting her to provide him with an heir. Second, if something were to happen to the husband she had a son to provide for her.\(^{154}\) Sarna explains the manner that the ancient East thought as he notes, “An Old Assyrian marriage contract stipulates that if the wife does not provide him with offspring within two years she must purchase a slave woman for the purpose.”\(^{155}\) Even though it seems out of character for today that was the norm for Sarai, Hagar, and Abraham. Baldwin notes, “When Sarai suggested that Hagar might become the substitute mother of her child she was following a socially acceptable precedent.”\(^{156}\)

A problem surfaced when Hagar looked down upon Sarai for not being able to have a child. Steinberg contends, “The text specifically reports that once Hagar learned of her pregnancy, she looked down on her barren mistress (v. 4: \textit{wattteqal gebirtah be’eneha}). Despite the fact of Hagar’s servitude, her status in the family has been increased by her pregnancy.”\(^{157}\) Was this status initiated because Sarai had taken matters into her own hands? Campbell suggests

\(^{154}\) Naomi Steinberg argues solely for this position. Steinberg, \textit{Kinship and Marriage in Genesis}.

\(^{155}\) Sarna, \textit{Genesis}, 119. Mathews states, “Ancient Near Eastern custom provided for the substitution of a slave for the purpose of bearing a child in the case of a barren mistress. If the wife could not produce children, the husband might marry another; perhaps the offer of a substitute circumvented the acquisition of a second wife. That barrenness was grounds for a divorce after a ten-year period is a rabbinic explanation for Sarai’s actions.” Mathews, \textit{Genesis 11:27–50:26}, 184–185.

\(^{156}\) Baldwin, \textit{The Message of Genesis 12–50}, 58.

\(^{157}\) Steinberg, \textit{Kinship and Marriage in Genesis}, 63.
that Sarai’s “carefully wrought scheme backfired on her with a speed and force that resulted in bitter rage.”\textsuperscript{158} Sarai’s scheming did not produce contentment, but instead strife. Baldwin adds to this image as he contends, “What had seemed to be reasonable, permissible by law, and expedient, was disrupting the family and causing a rift between husband and wife.”\textsuperscript{159}

God’s ideal union was to be between one man and one woman. But there appears to have been times when man determined to establish an additional wife to this ideal union. Perhaps the reason was because the union between a man and a woman was not viewed as a union of affection, but a means for providing an heir. When an heir could not be produced, the woman sought after means to provide an heir. Clearly, bigamy was a common way of life within the Ancient Near East.

**Polygamy as a Means for Enhancing Position within the Family**

Gen 2:24 provides the groundwork for the unity and solidarity that is needed for a “one flesh” relationship. God made the ideal union as a paradigm; which was to become the basis for the family. God’s intent was for a man and a woman to come together as one flesh, and for that union to produce progeny who were to replicate the one flesh union. These descendants were to be shown the standard so that they could start new one flesh unions and preserve the ideal paradigm. Yet, challenges developed so that the standard became twisted. One of the challenges for the ideal union was the lifestyle of polygamy. As noted earlier, polygamy began for a reason.

\textsuperscript{158} Campbell, “Rushing Ahead of God: An Exposition of Genesis 16:1–16,” 283. Campbell asserts, “This is indicated by the word she used in verse 5 to describe her injury, שׁמה, translated as ‘outrage.’ Elsewhere it is often translated ‘violence,’ and it occurs in 6:11 and 13 to describe the sins that prompted the Flood.” Ibid. Earlier, Campbell stresses, “The Bible teaches its own version of the sentiment in a story from the life of Abram: it is foolish and dangerous to rush ahead of God; wisdom calls for waiting on Him in faith.” Ibid., 276.

\textsuperscript{159} Baldwin, The Message of Genesis 12–50, 58.
Perhaps the reason was to fulfill God’s plan of multiplying and filling the earth. As previously noted, Sarai attempted to fill the earth, but could not so she used her handmaid to accomplish her task. Yet, this caused problems within the ideal union, but it also caused problems for the progeny. This section examines the unions that diverge from that standard by using family as a means to promote one’s position. Thus, this section explores polygamous unions characterized by an attempt to elevate one’s family position. The passages to be examined are: Gen 28:6–9; Gen 29:31–30:24; Gen 34:1–31; and Gen 35:22. Proper exegesis of those texts will be the first priority. Following that will be, a comparison to the standard set forth in Gen 2:24 is discussed.

**Genesis 28:6–9 – Esau Takes a Canaanite Wife**

The first account of polygamy being used to elevate one’s position within the family is in Gen 28:6–9. This account states that Esau took a Canaanite to be his wife, but she was no ordinary Canaanite woman; for she was the daughter of Ishmael – Isaac’s half-brother. Perhaps the motivation for Esau’s action was that he watched Isaac bless Jacob before sending him to Padan Aram to take a wife from his distant family instead of marrying a local Canaanite woman. Rebekah and Isaac had a familial goal for Jacob; they specifically demanded he go to Padan Aram to take a wife, forbidding him to marry a Canaanite (Gen 28:2). Jacob obeyed his father and mother, and went. Upon seeing this materialize Esau took Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael to be his wife. Esau knew that “the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac,” but perhaps someone from the local family would entice Isaac to bless Esau (Gen 28:8). The

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160 Josef Scharbert observes, “In Gen 27:34–40, one must keep in mind that the Yahwist, merely on the basis of his own contemporary historical situation in which ‘Jacob’ actually prevailed over ‘Esau,’ took over the tradition of a blessing of Isaac and molded it into a narrative. Thus, it would have been wholly impossible for him to have even considered that the surreptitious blessing could be revoked. The logical flow of the narrative also
thought of being blessed by the father seems to have been of great value. In some manner, the union between the man and woman looks to be have a part of receiving blessings. As Abraham advanced in age, he recognized God’s blessings upon his life so he sought for a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:1–4). Isaac, in turn, blessed Jacob, and sent him to find a wife from his mother’s clan (Gen 28:1–2). Esau did not want to miss the prospect of a blessing; for he appears to have gone to great extremes to appeal his father for blessings – he took another wife for himself. The only logical reason that he took Mahalath to be his wife was to receive Isaac’s blessing.

Key Word

The key word in this section is יָשָׂר. The word יָשָׂר is used approximately three hundred and ninety-eight times in the Old Testament – Genesis uses יָשָׂר eighty-eight times. Within the Old Testament usages, יָשָׂר is most often expended to express the idea of: “to bless.” Yet, there was a limitation within the understanding of blessing.

161 C. A. Keller and G. Wehmeier note: “The qal passive participle baruk indicates the state of possessing the b’raka (not the result of a preceding act of blessing: this status is expressed by the pual). As a rule baruk is used as a predicate in a nominative sentence; indicative forms of yhî ‘to demonstrate oneself’ are added only twice (Gen 27:33; Deut 7:14; both cases express the nuance ‘to prove oneself to be truly baruk’). In 63 of 71 cases, baruk is used in a pronouncedly formulaic manner, indeed, as a rule, emphatically at the beginning of an utterance (58x; also y’hî ‘may he be . . . baruk’: 1 Kgs 10:9 = 2 Chron 9:8; Prov 5:18; Ruth 2:19; negated in Jer 20:14). Of these 63 cases, 38 refer to God (also the Aramaic b’rik in Dan 3:28) and 25 to people (and things pertaining to them: Deut 28:4, offspring, v. 5 basket; 1 Sam 25:33, cleverness; Jer 20:14, day of birth). The remaining 8 cases refer to people: 3x in the construct phrase ‘blessed of Yahweh’ (Gen 24:31; 26:29; pl. Is 65:23) and 5x in a simple declaration that someone is ‘blessed’ (Gen 27:29 and Num 24:9, ‘whoever blesses you will be blessed:’ Gen 27:33, ‘he shall remain
In order to comprehend how a blessing worked, one had to know the basis from which the blessing originated. Blessings were typically thought of as having originated from God or god(s). But, the Ancient Near Eastern gods were thought to be distant and aloof.\textsuperscript{162} Those gods had their own communities and lives (along with their personal issues and concerns), and were not generally concerned with humanity. Yet, humanity desired and even strove to obtain a blessing from them.\textsuperscript{163} Michael Brown writes:

\begin{quote}
It must be stressed that nothing was more important than securing the blessing of God in one’s life or nation. All religious or superstitious peoples (in other words, virtually the entire ancient world, along with most of the world to this day) have actively sought the blessing of a specific deity or spirit, believing that this blessing will make them fertile, or prosper them, protect them, deliver them, heal them, empower them, exalt them, favor them, or possibly, bring about all the above. The blessing is thought of as tangible, its effects perceivable and, at times, measurable. The more powerful the deity, the more important the blessing.\textsuperscript{164}
\end{quote}

In the Bible, there is a similar pattern. The foundation of a blessing originates in God, and God applies His blessing to creation (Gen 1:22, 28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; 35:11; 47:27; Ex 1:7); God “blessed” Noah, and Noah “blesses” Shem and Japheth (Gen 9:26–27); God “blessed” the

\textsuperscript{162} John Walton clarifies as he notes, “The gods exist on earth only through their function.” John Walton, \textit{Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 89.

\textsuperscript{163} Brown comments, “A blessed life was the ideal; a life without God’s blessing (a fortiori, a life under God’s curse; cf. Jer 20:14) was the ultimate nightmare (cf. Ps 129:8; Jer 17:5–6; Mic 2:9). Real success was impossible without the much-coveted blessing. Abraham fervently prays in Gen 17:18, ‘If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!’ Nothing else really mattered.” Brown, “רָבָּה,” 758.

children of Israel by letting them be released from Egypt/Pharaoh’s hand (Ex 18:10); the women of Judah recognize the “blessing” that the Lord gave to Naomi (Ruth 4:14); David recognizes that God had “blessed” him by sending Abigail to him (1 Sam 25:32, 39); Ahimaaz praises God for “blessing” men by sparing their lives (2 Sam 18:28); Solomon praises God for “blessing” him with David’s kingdom (1 Kgs 1:48); Solomon praises God for “blessing” in the completion of the temple (1 Kgs 8:15); Solomon praises God for “blessing” the children of Israel with the fulfillment of His promise (1 Kgs 8:56); David praises God for His “blessing” (1 Chron 16:36). So, one can see that the blessing originated with God and His creation was the recipient of that blessing.

The patriarchs, also, understood that they were specifically blessed by God, and, in turn, they blessed their progeny. Isaac “blesses” Jacob (Genesis 27); Esau hated Jacob because of the “blessing” that Isaac gave to Jacob (Gen 27:41); Jacob “blesses” each of his sons according to the measure of his own “blessing” (49:28); God “blessed” Abraham’s servant with finding a
wife for Isaac (Gen 24:27). By passing alone the blessings of God, the fathers were including their sons in the divine blessings. Scharbert states:

> Just as the curse was intended to destroy a man’s solidarity with others when he grossly transgressed the basic ethical norms of his clan, religious community, or people, or to prevent his resisting powerful enemies, so the blessing is intended to strengthen solidarity with individuals and groups with whom he has or seeks particularly close social, racial, and religious relationships, to whom he owes special thanks, or whose works for his own community or for friends he appreciates. This solidarity was demonstrated by expressing congratulations, by uttering stereotyped formulas of blessing and appreciation (among which the *barukh*-formula was the most common), and by commending someone to God by extolling him and praying that God might bless him.\(^{168}\)

That type of solidarity was also created as men were able to “bless” one another with a specific power. Isaac “blessed” Jacob unknowingly (Gen 27:33); Balaam recognizes that the children of Israel are “blessed” (Num 22:12); God’s chosen people are given a “blessing” for being obedient to Him (Deut 7:14; 28:3, 6); Asher is said to be the most “blessed” of the sons of Jacob (Deut 33:24); David “blesses” Abigail for her service to him (1 Sam 25:33); Saul gave David his “blessing” for having spared his life (1 Sam 26:25); Joshua “blessed” Caleb giving him Hebron (Josh 14:13); Melchizedek “blessed” Abram (Gen 14:19).

It has been shown that the word כָּרָך means to “bless” someone or something. The word כָּרָך conveys the idea that someone or something can be “blessed” by the patriarch, who was blessed by the Lord.\(^{169}\) Thus, by taking Mahalath, a member of his local family, Esau was seeking to be blessed by Isaac.

\(^{168}\) Scharbert recommends, “The greeting is also a demonstration of solidarity, and therefore uses *brk.*” Scharbert, “כָּרָך,” 303.

\(^{169}\) Oswalt remarks, “The verbal blessing was normally futuristic. However, it could be descriptive, an acknowledgment that the person addressed was evidently possessed of this power for abundant and effective living (Gen 14:19; 1 Sam 26:25). This address becomes a formalized means of expressing thanks and praise to this person.
The Notion of Genesis 28:6–9 in the Wake of Research

The significance of this passage of Scripture is that Esau desperately wanted his father’s blessing. Even though his birthright had no meaning to him, receiving Isaac’s blessing because of the birthright did. As a consequence, he decided to take his father’s niece to be his wife so that he could perhaps appeal to his father. Sarna points out: “Realizing that his marriages outside the kinship group and his alliances with the native women had contributed to his loss of the blessing, Esau now tries to repair the situation. He takes to wife the daughter of his father’s brother, an act that corresponds to Jacob’s move.”

Mathews presses the point further as he vies, “The identity of ‘Mahalath’ as the granddaughter of Abraham gives the marriage its special importance.”

But, there was one problem. Keil and Delitzsch have noted that Esau “failed to consider that Ishmael had been separated from the house of Abraham and family of promise by the appointment of God.” Thus, the desired blessing of Isaac never materialized. Esau’s position within the family remained as it was.

because he has given out of the abundance of life. Very commonly, the Lord is addressed in this way. It is significant that hesed ‘kindness’ and emet ‘faithfulness’ are very frequently those attributes for which God is praised (e.g., Ps 31:21; 106:48). It is clear that for the Old Testament the abundant life rests directly upon the loving and faithful nature of God.” Oswalt, “ה滞后,” 285. Keller and Wehmeier explain that “a close functional relationship between blessing and call to obedience also exists, mirrored in a peculiar duplication of statements: on the one hand, the promise of blessing is issued in an unconditional form (Deut 16:15; 28:8, 12); on the other hand, one encounters statements that call for keeping the commandments ‘in order that Yahweh, your God, may bless you’ (14:29; 23:21; 24:19; cf. 15:10, 18) or which are conditionally phrased ‘if you . . . then Yahweh, your God, will bless you’ (30:16; cf. 7:12f.; 15:4f.). That Yahweh grants blessing freely demands recognition of his exclusive power to bless.” Keller and Wehmeier, “ה滞后,” 278.

170 Sarna, Genesis, 196.


172 Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 281. Sailhamer remarks, “In the marriage of Esau to the daughter of Ishmael, there is a reminder that the promised offspring of Abraham was determined, not by the will of man, but ultimately by the will of God.” Sailhamer, Genesis, 195.
Genesis 29:13–30:24 – Jacob, Bilhah and Zilpah

The second account of polygamy being used to advance one’s position within the family is in Gen 29:13–30:24. This narrative is a passage that depicts the story of Jacob’s family and the saga of how he ended up with two wives to become the father of the nation of Israel. Jacob loved Rachel Laban’s younger daughter. This narrative presents a case of how the two sisters battled with each other, even to the point where they used their own servants, as extensions of themselves, in order to establish their position within Jacob’s family. Jacob’s love for Rachel and his hatred for Leah became the basis for his family issues. Subsequently, Jacob’s sons wrangled for family positioning as was taught and modeled to them by their mothers.

Key Words

The first key word of this analysis is the word רע. The word רע is used approximately one hundred and sixty-four times in the Old Testament. Within these usages, רע is most often expended to express the idea of: “to hate.”

Gerard van Groningen observes that the word רע “expresses an emotional attitude toward persons and things which are opposed, detested, despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship. It is therefore the opposite of love. Whereas love draws and unites, hate separates and keeps distant.”


174 E. Lipinski enhances by writing: “The verb sane’, ‘hate’ refers to an emotional condition of aversion that Old Testament anthropology locates ‘in the heart’ (leb, Lev 19:17) or in the nepes (2 Sam 5:8; Ps 11:5). Although it does not necessarily indicate that wicked intentions accompany such hate, it does imply a distancing from the hated person, that person’s removal from the surroundings of the person who hates.” E. Lipinski, “рат,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 164.
God’s account for how He feels about someone or somethings is one aspect of the word שׂנָא.\textsuperscript{175} God “hates” Israel’s feast days (Amos 5:21); God “hates” evil in one’s heart, and a false oath (Zech 8:17); God “hates” the deception found in false worship of Him (Is 1:13–15); God “hates” pretense in worship (Deut 16:22); God “hates” six things (Prov 6:16); the Lord “hates” those who love violence (Ps 11:5); (Mal 1:3); God “hates” divorce (Mal 2:16); the Lord “hates” sin (Ps 45:7).

Thus, שׂנָא can be comprehended as a word that expresses a “hate” of someone or something. It is an antonym for the word love.\textsuperscript{176} As a consequence, one can surmise that the

\textsuperscript{175} E. Lipinski states, “In the Old Testament Yahweh directs his hate less against concrete persons than against certain behaviors. He ‘hates’ the originally Canaanite cultic practices (Deut 12:31), especially the erection of sacred pillars (Deut 16:22; cf. 11QT 52:2) and the cult of alien gods (Jer 44:4). He similarly displays great repugnance toward the hypocritical festivals of his people (Is 1:14; Amos 5:21) and the pilfered goods offered as sacrifices (Is 61:8). One can compare this text with a passage from the Ugaritic Ba’al cycle in which Ba’al complains that human beings pay him only stingy, unworthy homage: ‘For two [kinds of offering] banquets Ba’al hates (sn ’B’l), three the Rider of the Clouds; a banquet of shamefulness, a banquet of baseness, and a banquet of handmaids’ debauch.’ Yahweh also hates false oaths (Zech 8:17), wickedness (resa’, Ps 45:8), though also kingship in Israel (Hos 9:15), which was established at Gilgal (1 Sam 11:14–15) but then cursed (1 Sam 13:7–14; 15:10–23). God’s ‘hate’ manifests itself in his distance, as Jer 12:7–8 states explicitly; because God ‘hates’ his house and heritage, he abandons them and delivers them into the hands of their enemies.” E. Lipinski, “שׂנָא,” 167.

person that hates removes any type of desire for the person that is hated.\textsuperscript{177} The sense of how a man feels towards a woman can exemplify the word \textit{s\textsuperscript{n}u\textsuperscript{a}}.\textsuperscript{178} Jacob “hated” Leah (Gen 29:31, 33).\textsuperscript{179}

The narrator’s insight of how Jacob felt about Leah is valuable. The reason is that it allows one to see why polygamy was not the ideal union. In reality, when another woman was

\textsuperscript{177} Konkel asserts, “The use of hate in Mal 2:16 is a crux; the text, syntax, and general meaning are all in question. . . . It seems best to take the subject of \textit{sn}' as the one divorcing his wife, in an asyndetic relationship with the verb for divorce (\textit{slh}). Westbrook has shown that the use of the term hate for divorce in the Aramaic papyri is an abbreviation of a longer formula. In the full formula, as found in Mal 2:16, hate provides a motive for the divorce, i.e., the cause is not misconduct. Hugenberger concludes that the text of Mal 2:16 should not be emended; the subject of \textit{sn}' is indefinite and is modified by the piel infinitive abstract of \textit{slh} to speak of one who divorces his wife out of hatred. The verb \textit{sn}' provides the reason why the divorce under consideration is an unacceptable violence.” Konkel, “\textit{s\textsuperscript{nu\textsuperscript{a}}},” 1258. Lipinski adds to this concept as he notes, “One view holds that \textit{sn}' originally referred to the mutual disappearance of feeling between spouses and to the cessation of sexual relations. By analogy with Babylonian law, which uses the verb \textit{zeru}, ‘hate,’ in connection with divorce, the West Semitic verb \textit{sn}' may take on the same meaning. The condition put forth in the Code of Hammurabi, ‘if a woman so hated her husband that . . .’ (\textit{summa sinnistu musa izirma . . .}), recalls the formulation of Deut 22:13 as well as the clause in the Old Babylonian contracts using the verb ‘hate.’ Another view holds that even \textit{sn}' was a verb of action with the juridical sense of ‘divorce.’ A compromise position mediates between the understanding as an action or static verb designating an emotional condition and leads to translations such a ‘disown, repudiate’ or ‘desire a divorce.’ Use of \textit{sn}' in Hebrew, in any event, leaves no doubt that this verb expresses an emotional condition implying the wish for separation or removal from the ‘hated’ person.” Lipinski, “\textit{s\textsuperscript{nu\textsuperscript{a}}},” 168–169.

\textsuperscript{178} E. Jenni contends, “In reference to the relationship between man and woman, \textit{sn}' usually implies a contrast to the expected or prior relationship of love: ‘to hate’ (Ezek 23:29) signifies, then, ‘to love no longer, develop dislike for,’ etc. (Deut 22:13; 16; 24:3; Judg 14:16; 15:2; 2 Sam 13:15). The qal feminine participle \textit{s\textsuperscript{nu}'a} indicates an unloved, scorned woman (Prov 30:23; Sir 7:26; cf. Is 60:15, Zion par ‘\textit{zuba} ‘abandoned’). A clearly relative usage of \textit{sn}' describes one of a man’s two wives as ‘\textit{huba} ‘preferred,’ and the other as \textit{s\textsuperscript{nu}'a} ‘less beloved, neglected, scorned wife’ (Gen 29:31, 33, Leah; Deut 21:15–17, inheritance law).” E. Jenni, “\textit{s\textsuperscript{nu\textsuperscript{a}}},” in \textit{Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament}, vol. 3 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 1278.

\textsuperscript{179} A. H. Konkel maintains, “The use of loved and hated to describe the attitude toward a preferred wife as opposed to the one who was tolerated or even rejected (Gen 29:31, 33) lends to hate the sense of being unloved or not chosen, or even abandoned and rejected. The unloved (\textit{s\textsuperscript{nu}'a}) woman who marries shakes the very foundations of order (Prov 30:23). In the metaphorical extension of the conjugal relationship Jerusalem is described as an abandoned bride (Is 54:6), as a city abandoned and rejected (\textit{s\textsuperscript{nu}'a}; Is 60:15); Ezekiel describes Jerusalem as the prostitute whose lover (Assyria) now hates her, leaving her stripped and naked (Ezek 23:28–29). When the prophet Malachi says, ‘I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated’ (Mal 1:2–3), he is emphasizing the sovereign choice of God; nevertheless, the rejection of Esau leads further to their judgment.” A. H. Konkel, “\textit{s\textsuperscript{nu\textsuperscript{a}}},” in \textit{New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis}, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1257.
brought into the union between a man and a woman, no matter what the circumstance, the implied purpose for the union became distorted. The man, the woman, and the children did not act in a manner that was pleasant to the other members of the family.

God seems to have formed the union between the man and the woman ideally for an emotional standpoint, and pragmatically for a physical stance. Emotionally the union was for support and encouragement, and pragmatically the union was to provide support in producing a family. According to Gen 2:24, it appears that God made man to have a desire only for one woman. Gen 2:24 states that the ideal union was to be between one man and one woman. However, polygamy muddled the ideal union; for it provided a means where various family members began to try to assert positioning within the family.

The second word of this investigation is the word בקע. The word בקע is used approximately three hundred and ninety-eight times in the Old Testament. Within these usages, בקע is most often expended to express the idea of: “to lie down,” or “to have intercourse.”180 While בקע also means “lie down” in sleep or death (i.e., Deut 6:7; 11:19; Judg 5:27). בקע also has the understanding to “lie down” in order to have sex. The purpose of this study is to examine how בקע was used sexually in this narrative.181


181 W. Beuken holds, “Although skb is used to mean ‘sleep with someone, having sexual intercourse with someone,’ almost as often (55 times) as it does to mean simply ‘sleep,’ these occurrences are limited to quite specific literary genres (laws: Ex 22:15, 18; Lev 15:18, 24, 33; 18:22; 19:20; 20:11, 12, 13, 18, 20; Num 5:13, 19; Deut 22:22, 23, 25, 28, 29; imprecations: Deut 27:20, 21, 22, 230, stories of abnormal sexual behavior (Gen 19:32, 33, 34, 35; 26:10; 35:22; 39:7, 10, 12, 14; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 11:4; Jer 3:2; Ezk 23:80 or abomination (34:2, 7; 2
There are several Old Testament passages to demonstrate how בֶּקֶר was used sexually.\textsuperscript{182} Lots daughters got him drunk so they could “lie” with him (Gen 19:32–35); Abimelech called out Isaac for having allowed Rebekah to be known as his sister so that someone could have “lain” with her (Gen 26:10); Rachel allowed Leah “to lie” with Jacob for her son’s mandrakes (30:15); Shechem “lay” with Dinah, causing Levi and Simeon great anguish (Gen 34:2, 7); Reuben “laid” with Bilhah (Gen 35:22). Waltke points out that the word בֶּקֶר is used only “as a euphemism for sex, is never used for loving marital intercourse” in the Book of Genesis.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{182} Beuken conveys that “whenever a person includes his/her beloved in this act of ‘lying down, sleeping,’ in the sense of sexual intercourse, a whole new semantic spectrum is evoked, one containing, of course, an ethical element in that precisely this activity involves responsibility toward one’s fellow human being (Ex 22:15; Lev 15:24; 20:18; Deut 22:25; 27:22–23; 2 Sam 12:24; Prov 7:17) and toward those associated with that person (Gen 19:32; 30:15–16; 39:7ff.; Lev 18:20; 19:20; 20:11–12; 20; Num 5:13, 19–20; Deut 22:22–23, 28, 27:20; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 11:11, 13). Shirking such responsibility accordingly burdens a person with sin (Gen 26:10; 34:2 in connection with v. 7; 39:7; 49:4; 2 Sam 12:11–12; 13:11–12; Ps 36:5; Hos 7:14; Amos 6:4; Micah 2:1). There is also a eudemonic element in that in striving to attain happiness through sexual intimacy (Gen 39:7; Prov 7:17; Cant 3:1) a person encounters the God who through blessing (Ruth 3:10, 13) or curse (Deut 28:30; Is 13:16; Zech 14:2) can bring about or thwart this profound wish depending on whether a person is obedient to God’s word (Deut 6:7; 11:19). Finally, this context touches on the central creed whenever Israel metaphorically or through ritual engages in sexual intercourse with the gods, since so constitutes disloyalty to Yahweh (Is 47:7–8; Jer 3:2; Ezek 23:8, 17).” Beuken, “בֶּקֶר,” 670.

\textsuperscript{183} Waltke notes that בֶּקֶר is only used for illicit or forced sex: “Lot’s daughters with Lot (19:32–35); the Philistines with Rebekah (26:10); Shechem with Dinah (34:2, 7); Reuben with Bilhah (35:22); Potiphar’s wife with Joseph (39:7, 10, 12, 14).” Waltke, Genesis, 413. Sarna adds to this by writing: “The pathetic nature of this barter arrangement is underlined by the striking fact that the verb שָׁקַר, when employed in Genesis with a sexual nuance, never connotes a relationship of marital love but is invariably used in unsavory circumstances.” Sarna, Genesis, 209.
The third word of this study to be surveyed is the word סוכְל. The word סוכְל is used approximately three hundred and ninety-eight times in the Old Testament. Within these usages, סוכְל is most often expended to express the idea of: “to hire.”

The general notion of the word סוכְל is employing someone, with pay, to do some type of work. Pharaoh’s daughter “hired” Moses’ mother to tend to him (Ex 2:9); Balaam was “hired” by Balak to place a curse on Israel (Num 18:31); Micah “hired” a young Levite to be his priest (Judg 18:4). In context of this research, Leah “hires” Jacob, with mandrakes, to have sex with her (Gen 30:16). The “ideal union” was anything but ideal.

It seems strange that a woman would have to hire her husband for an action that was a part of the ideal union. Yet, Leah used mandrakes that her son had acquired so that she could have sex with her husband. Sex became nothing more than an act to gain a position within the family. In a sense, Leah had become a stranger in her house so that she had to pay something in order to get something. She had to hire her husband for sex. Yet, this sex was not to be seen as a natural encounter, but a forced act for the possibility of producing another child. This entire episode demonstrates how the lifestyle of polygamy violates the ideal union.

184 Cornelis Van Dam writes: “The basic meaning of the verb is the granting of payment for labor, services, or almost any type of benefit received from someone. Thus, in the verb’s first occurrence, Leah hired Jacob for the price of mandrakes given to Rachel in order to sleep with him (Gen 30:16). When she conceived and bore a son, she said (lit.): ‘God has given me my wages (skr),’ and she called him Issachar (apparently related to ‘is sakar; 30:18).” Cornelis Van Dan, “סוכְל,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1244.

185 E. Lipinski observes, “Gen 30:18 views Issachar as Leah’s ‘reward’ (sakar; NRSV ‘hire’). This verse is using wordplay, since a descendant is a ‘reward’ (Ps 127:3), like the one God promises to Abraham (Gen 15:1). Elsewhere sakar refers to the ‘wages’ of Moses nurse (Ex 2:9) or to the price paid to a laborer for performing a specified task, meaning that the word usually exhibits (Deut 15:18; 24:15; Eccl 4:9; Zech 8:10; Mal 3:5).” E. Lipinski, “סוכְל,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 133.
There is one noticeable element concerning Gen 29:31–30:24, and that is in the notion of being loved. This noticeable issue demonstrates how love or the lack of love can cause the jockeying for position within the dysfunctional family of Jacob. Kidner states, “On the human plane the story demonstrates the craving of human beings for love and recognition, and the price of thwarting it.”

Baldwin states, “Though Leah became Jacob’s first wife she was not the beloved wife. This she was only too aware of, and even the birth of four sons did little to comfort her. She longed for the affection of her husband, and proclaimed the fact in her comments in the naming of her children, whom she saw as gifts from the Lord.”

Leah hoped that by having four sons with Jacob, he would change his mind, and lover her. Yet, as Hamilton rightly states, “Reuben’s birth has not caused a change in Jacob’s feelings about Leah. Interestingly, Jacob

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186 Kidner, Genesis, 161. Kidner adds that “on the divine level it shows once again the grace of God choosing difficult and unpromising material.” Ibid.


188 Mathews notes that the different sons’ names seem to convey this idea as follows: “Leah’s explanation for the name ‘Reuben,’ meaning ‘see, [a] son’ is a pun on ‘has seen.’ The name also corresponds to the narration, ‘When the Lord saw,’ in v. 31. Moreover, Reuben’s name may be suggestive of Leah’s eyes. The ‘misery’ that she has in mind must be her neglected state since she connects it with her husband’s love. . . . Leah expresses the Lord’s involvement explicitly in her explanation of the child’s name. ‘Simeon’ plays on the word ‘heard.’ . . . ‘Now at last’ expresses Leah’s frustration at failing to win her husband’s love. . . . The naming of ‘Levi’ plays on the sound of ‘become attached to’ (yillaweh from lwh), meaning, ‘joined to,’ presumably to her husband. . . . In naming her fourth child, Leah departs from her obsession with winning the love of Jacob. Rather, she exalts the Lord at the birth of Judah. ‘I will praise’ leads to the name ‘Judah,’ meaning ‘he will be praised.’” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 480–481.
takes no part in naming the children.”

Perhaps this is a textual comment about how Jacob might have felt about Leah.

The situation for Jacob only seemed to grow worse as Leah had her children. Rachel was not able to have children. At first she blames Jacob for her barrenness. Then, she takes it upon herself to resolve the matter. Wenham remarks that “Rachel is set on solving her problem by her own devices and not waiting for God to act.” Her solution was to give Bilhah to Jacob in order to have children through Bilhah. And, Bilhah did fulfill her responsibility and bore children to Jacob. Rachel gave God the recognition for the birth of Dan.

The plot continued to intensify as Leah stopped bearing. Following the actions of Rachel, Leah gave her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob.

Mathews suggests that Leah’s fertility may have

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190 Waltke notes, “In spite of having the Lord’s favor and gifts, her hope is not realized. She must learn to find her emotional fulfillment in the Lord’s grace alone.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 410.

191 Bailey notes, “Rachel is jealous of her sister and she attempts to remedy the situation not be requesting divine intervention but in a practical way by confronting her husband Jacob. Rachel blames Jacob for her childless state. Ironically, she claims that she will die if she does not have children. She, in fact, dies not from an absence of children but in giving birth to a child (Gen 35:16–20). Her accusation against Jacob is quite rational. In the Bible, men are always said to carry the seed. The women were thought to be the soil into which the seed is planted by the man. When Rachel blames Jacob, she is simply indicating that she is unable to become pregnant because Jacob is either not sleeping with her or that he is unable to copulate with her when he does. In the face of Rachel’s challenge, Jacob blames God.” Bailey, “Intimate Moments: A Study of Genesis 29:31–30:21,” 8.

192 Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 244. Waltke states, “Rachel’s jealousy of her sister is rooted in her social disgrace as a barren wife. She wants to gain respect and publicly to validate her marriage. Ironically, Rachel is jealous of a sister who has been pawned off to a husband who does not love her.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 411.

193 Keil and Delitzsch remark: “It is to be noticed, that Rachel speaks of *Elohim* only, whereas Leah regarded her first four sons as the gift of Jehovah. In this variation of the names, the attitude of the two women, not only to one another, but also to the cause they served, is made apparent.” Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 288.

194 Keil and Delitzsch note, “The means employed by Rachel to retain the favor of her husband made her jealous; and jealousy drove her to the employment of the same means.”Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, 289. Keil and Delitzsch state, “Leah did not think of God in connection with Gad and Asher. They were nothing more than the successful and welcome result of the means she had employed.” Ibid.
been the motivation for her giving Zillah. He writes, “Ironically, that she ceased bearing children for a season may have been the result of birthing four sons. Jacob may well have withdrawn his sexual attention after obtaining sons.”

Perhaps, this explains the situation.

Following the Zilpah narrative, Rachel saw that Reuben, Leah’s oldest son, had harvested mandrakes with which Leah “hires” Jacob. Hamilton points out that “Leah hired (sakar) Jacob rather than ‘bought’ him [which] indicates that this is a temporary arrangement.” The payment was Reuben’s mandrakes. Leah has been left to bargain for the attention of her husband. Wenham states, “Leah’s reaction is understandable; she is aggrieved not simply that she has stopped bearing children but that Jacob ‘my husband’ rarely sleeps with her, preferring Rachel’s bed. Suspension of conjugal rights can, according to the usual interpretation of Exod 21:10, be grounds for divorce.”

Mathews points out that “Leah, like her father has made a deal for


196 Bailey illuminates the importance of the mandrakes as she writes: “Mediterranean mandrakes are not edible but they were used in magical rituals and perhaps as an aphrodisiac in the eastern Mediterranean world. Rachel wants some of the mandrakes. If mandrakes were used as an aphrodisiac, it is ironic that Jacob does not need one to copulate with any woman except Rachel. This is the only place in the narrative where Leah expresses anger. She accuses Rachel, certainly unfairly, with having taken away her husband (Gen 3:15). But Leah agrees to give her some of the mandrakes in exchange for the privilege of sleeping with her husband. . . . When Leah approaches Jacob, she informs him that she has hired him (Gen 30:16). At this point, Leah is treating Jacob, her husband, like a slave. She purchases his services from her sister not directly from him. No longer the man that she is pining after, he is now nothing more to her than a slave hired for his stud services.” Bailey, “Intimate Moments: A Study of Genesis 29:31–30:21,” 9.

197 Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50, 275. Mathews notes, “By taking the mandrakes, Rachel robs her of the means she has of winning his pleasure. Rachel changes her tactic by proposing a business arrangement. In some way left unexplained in the story, Rachel must have at least temporary control over the conjugal life of Jacob, for she permits a one-night rendezvous in exchange for some of Leah’s mandrakes.” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 487.

198 Kidner notes, “Mandrakes were thought to induce fertility, as their amorous Hebrew name suggests; hence Rachel’s eagerness for them. The outcome was ironical, the mandrakes doing nothing for Rachel, while Leah gained another son by parting with them.” Kidner, Genesis, 162.

199 Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 247.
Jacob’s services. She did not wait for his arrival at the house but went out to meet him.”200 At this point, Leah acted not for love, but for family positioning. Westermann states, “The narrator’s purpose in recounting this interlude is to show that in the time of the patriarchs quarrels between women were as important as quarrels between men. They had to do with social rank and status.”201 The once kindly Leah had become ruthless to gain a favorable position within Jacob’s family.202

It seems bizarre that the union between the man and a woman could digress to the point where a woman used her husband for sex. An act that seemingly was meant for a man and a woman, appears to have been used for leverage. Sex, especially in a polygamist union, was used to position one’s self within the family. Sex was used for hire, and not for the solidarity of the family. As previously noted, the word עֵדֶן is only used “as a euphemism for sex,” and it “is never used for loving marital intercourse” as necessitated in an ideal union.203 In each of the sexual encounters within this section, they were not to be seen as a natural occurrences, but were compulsory occasions where sex was used for the desire of producing another child. The entire episode of Gen 29:13–30:24 reveals how the lifestyle of polygamy disregards the ideal union.

201 Westermann, *Genesis*, 211–212. Westermann contends that “there is a profound conflict between recognition as mother and recognition based on personal attraction. Here it is the woman who defends the interests of the individual against overemphasis on the interests of society.” Ibid.
202 Dennis Olson suggests, “In describing the two sisters the narrator contrasts the young Rachel who was ‘graceful and beautiful, with Leah whose eyes were rakko (Hebrew). In most contexts, the adjective rakko has a positive meaning of ‘tender/delicate/lovely’ but in this context it may also mean ‘weak/feeble.’ Leah’s outer beauty may be marred by ‘weak eyes,’ her eyes may be ‘lovely,’ or her eyes may reveal an inner disposition of delicate tenderness (Gen 29:17).” Dennis Olson, “Revenge, Forgiveness, and Sibling Rivalry: A Theological Dialogue Between Scripture and Science” *Ex Auditu* 28 (2012): 114.
203 Waltke, *Genesis*, 413.
The ideal union was for a man and a woman to produce progeny, who would then replicate what they saw.

**Genesis 34:1–31 – Shechem Rapes Dinah**

Gen 34:1–31 gives the account where Jacob’s familial leadership collapsed. The story begins by stating that Dinah, Leah’s daughter, left Jacob’s house. Whatever the reason, it would appear that Dinah thought that her father’s house was no longer an appealing place for her. As a result, she left, and ended up at Shechem’s house. During her stay at his house, Shechem violated her. Upon hearing this news, Jacob did nothing at first, but later made an effort to arrange a treaty with Hamor, Shechem’s father, and the men of the village. It seems odd that Jacob did nothing at first, and then tried to make a treaty with the perpetrator. Jacob’s sons, on the other hand, were grieved when they heard the report of what had happened to their sister. As Jacob endeavored to make a treaty with Hamor and the village, Simeon and Levi (Dinah’s brothers), devised a plan. They encouraged the men of the village, including Shechem and his father, to be circumcised so that the men of Hamor’s village could demonstrate their desire to be loyal to the house of Jacob. After the third day that the men consented to be circumcised, Simeon and Levi took matters into their hands, and killed all of the men of the village, including Hamor and Shechem’s.

The narrative describes the story of Leah’s children and their disregard for their father, Jacob. Jacob’s love for Rachel (younger daughter), and disdain for Leah (older daughter) had produced a mistrust in the family. This narrative presents a case for how Leah’s children did not feel that Jacob had their best interest at heart. Therefore, they took their lives into their own hands. Dinah left her father’s house, and Simeon and Levi usurped their father’s treaty with
Hamor for their own form of justice. As a consequence, Leah’s children showed no regard for their father – Jacob. Instead, they stooped to slaughter in order to prove and improve their position within the family.

Key Words

רמן

The first word to be look at in this passage is רמן. Within all of these usages, רמן is most often expended to express the idea of: “marriage present,” “bride price,” “the price for the bride,” or “the payment for the bride.” Interestingly, the word רמן is used only three times in the Old Testament: Hamor’s son, Shechem, was willing to pay a mohar for Dinah (Gen 34:12); if a virgin woman was seduced by a man, her family was given a mohar (Ex 22:16); David executed a valiant deed for King Saul and was given Michal’s hand as a mohar (1 Sam 18:25).

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204 Robin Wakely contends, “The evidence suggests that the mohar was normally a sum of money paid by the bridegroom to the bride’s family at the time of betrothal and that, from this point onwards, the marriage, though not yet consummated, was legally in force. The amount of the mohar varied. Some think the sum was fixed after agreement had been reached between the suitor and the girl’s family. Others think the evidence indicates that the girl’s father set the price he desired.” Robin Wakely, “רמן,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 860. Later she states, “It is probable that the mohar paid by the bridegroom to the family of the bride at the time of betrothal was not so much the price paid for the woman as a form of compensation given to the family.” Ibid. E. Lipinski adds to understanding of mohar as he writes: “The biblical evidence does not allow the conclusion that the father of the girl kept the mohar for himself. Quite the opposite seems to have been the case when Rachel and Leah turn against their own father, who has ‘delivered’ them after he ‘has been using up their money (Gen 31:15). The mohar thus actually seems to have become a financial gift to the woman to secure her in case she was cast out or lost her husband.” E. Lipinski, “רמן,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 145.

205 Wakely utters, “Whereas sexual intercourse between a man and a consenting betrothed virgin was considered adultery and was punished by the death of the couple, neither the man nor the woman was put to death in the case of sexual relations between a man and an unbetrothed virgin. The man found guilty of having seduced an unbetrothed virgin was ordered to pay the mohar and take the girl as his wife (mahor zimharenna lo f’issa). Should the victim’s father refuse to give his daughter to the man, then the seducer had to pay money equivalent to the mohar for virgins.” Wakely, “רמן,” 861.
However, there are a couple of passages within the Old Testament that seem to imply that a *mohar* was paid: Jacob worked for fourteen years for Laban in order to marry Leah and Rachel (Gen 29:15–30); Othniel performed a courageous act for Caleb’s daughter as a wife (Josh 15:16). Shechem desired Dinah, and wanted to pay the price for her so that she would be his bride. Yet, it seems surprising that Shechem tried to pay the price for Dinah since he violated her. Perhaps, the reason that Shechem tried to pay the price for Dinah was that she told Shechem that she wanted to leave her father’s house, and he had to pay the price for her.

The second word to be inspected is the word נבלת. Yet, to be more specific with this analysis one intends to examine נבלת as it is applied to sexual acts. When applied sexually, the word נבלת is used approximately seven times in the Old Testament. Within these usages, נבלת is most often expended to express the thought of “folly.”

There is a certain manner in which the world is supposed to function. According to Phillips, there are certain ways that one should act in life and “folly consists in failing to observe

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206 Anthony Phillips defines: “It is clear that nebalah indicates action which is to be utterly deplored. Thus while with one exception KOHLER-BAUMGARTNER treats the word as ‘a euphemism for heavy sin.’ BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS holds that it always amounts to something disgraceful.’ *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* describes it as ‘an understatement for outright sinfulness.’ Its connection with outrageous sexual offences has often been noted, but its use is considerably wider. Thus while it is applied to Shechem’s rape of Dinah (Gen 34:7); to Amnon’s rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13:12); to attempted sodomy and communal rape (Judg 19:23f., 20:6, 10); to adultery (Jer 29:23); and to a woman’s loss of virginity before marriage (Deut 22:21), it is also used of Achan’s breach of the ban on Jericho (Josh 7:15); of Nabal’s normal behavior (1 Sam 25:25); of the defense of God by Job’s friends (Job 42:8); and of deceptive words (Is 9:16; 32:6); including false prophecy (Jer 29:23).” Anthony Phillips, “Nebalah: A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct” *Vetus Testamentum* 25/2 (1975): 237.
life’s essential rules.”

This is expressed in the manner that הַלּוֹנָה is used sexually: Shechem violated, the virgin, Dinah in an act of folly (Gen 34:7). This type of use is also found when Amnon lusted after his sister, Tamar, so he raped her in a passionate act of folly (2 Sam 13:12); the request to have a homosexual relationship with the Levite was seen as an act of folly (Judg 19:23); the Benjaminites sexually overpowered the concubine and was viewed as an act of folly (Judg 20:6, 10); if a woman pretends to be a virgin she is regarded as a woman of folly (Deut 22:21); the prophets Ahab and Zedekiah are charged with folly because of their adulterous acts (Jer 29:23).

**Genesis 34:1–31 in the Wake of Research**

The narrative of Genesis 34 displays a collapse of Jacob’s patriarchal leadership. Gen 34:1 commences by stating Dinah who was born to Leah, and who was the daughter of Jacob,

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207 Phillips, “Nebalah: A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct”, 237. Louis Goldberg suggests, “נֵבָלָה carries the same meaning as nabal, i.e. a disregard for moral and spiritual claims. In every way, נֵבָלָה is senseless, impious and a disgrace, and his actions are sinful folly.” Louis Goldberg, “הַלּוֹנָה,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 547.

208 In order to obtain a better comprehension of the word הַלּוֹנָה a study of a parallel word יָרֵע is helpful. Ellen Van Wolde is the conductor of this study. Upon her findings, she states, “The widespread opinion that the verb ‘inna in the Pi’el refers to ‘rape’ or ‘sexual abuse’ is not acceptable.” Ellen Van Wolde, “Does ‘inna Denote Rape? A Semantic Analysis of a Controversial Word” Vetus Testamentum 52/4 (2002): 543. Her study uses most of the passages that are concerned with the word הַלּוֹנָה.

209 J. Marbock maintains, “The formula ‘asa n’bala b’yisra’el or ‘asa n’bala hazzo’t occurs 9 times, with minor variations. In it n’bala is the result of human action. Four of these occurrences are in Judges, one each in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 2 Samuel, and Jeremiah. In this formula n’bala is the object of human action. It is noteworthy that, except for Deut 22:21, the formula does not occur in legal texts: it is found instead in narratives (Judg 19:23f.; 2 Sam 13:12 in discourse). The form ‘asa n’bala b’yisra’el occurs 6 times, in each of its settings as the motivation for punitive sanctions or in reaction to a serious transgression (Gen 34:7; Deut 22:21; Josh 7:15; Judg 20:6, 10; Jer 29:23). The form ‘asa n’bala hazzo’t occurs 3 times as a warning: twice as a vetitive with ‘al (Judg 19:23; 2 Sam 13:12), once as a prohibitive with lo’ (Judg 19:24). Twice it is followed by the apodictic statement ‘Such a thing ought not to be done’ (Gen 34:7) or ‘Such a thing is not done in Israel’ (2 Sam 13:12).” J. Marbock, “הַלּוֹנָה,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 167.
left her father’s house. Waltke conveys the concern as he asserts, “This is an improper and imprudent act. She should not have gone out unchaperoned. . . . Jacob has not modeled appropriate distancing from the Canaanites and possibly has influenced Dinah’s inappropriate friendliness with them.” Sarna adds by stating, “Girls of marriageable age would not normally leave a rural encampment to go unchaperoned into an alien city. The text casts a critical eye upon Dinah’s unconventional behavior.”

There are a couple of issues that make 34:2 noteworthy for this research. The first issue was that Jacob’s patriarchal leadership had been ignored. First is the manner in which Dinah left her father’s house. The narrator does not explain why Dinah chose to leave, but that she left.

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210 Mathews states, “That Dinah ‘went out’ describes her intention to observe the habits of Canaanite women, leaving the protection of her father’s settlement.” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 590. Mathews shares, “Jewish interpretation charged Dinah with prostitution, blaming her for the incident and likening her to her mother Leah, who ‘went out’ (30:16) to entice Jacob sexually (Gen. Rab. 80:1).” Ibid.

211 Waltke, Genesis, 461–462.

212 Sarna, Genesis, 233.

213 Wenham states, “Though ‘went out to visit the girls of the land’ sounds perfectly innocent, the terms used may suggest Dinah’s imprudence, if not impropriety.” Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 310. Wenham later notes, “In LH 141 the cognate Akkadian verb wasu describes a housewife who conducts herself improperly outside her home, and the targums translate ‘cult prostitute’ as ‘one who goes out in the countryside.’ Furthermore, Genesis regularly condemns all intermarriage with women of the land (Gen 24:3, 37; 27:46; 28:1, 6, 8), so it may be doubted whether it totally approves of Dinah meeting the girls of the land, for they might have introduced her to one of the boys. Dinah was at least sailing close to the wind!” Ibid.

214 Dinah left the authority of her father’s house. This idea is somewhat reminiscent of Gen 2:24: “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. However, it is reversed – a backward/deviant way of thinking. Hamilton states, “It is true that in the marriage relationship the Bible mandates the husband’s separation from his parents and ‘clinging to his wife’ (w’debaq b’isto, 2:24). But when 34:3 speaks of Shechem being so strongly attracted to Dinah (lit., ‘his soul clung to Dinah,’ wattidbaq napso b’dina; here is a case of nepes meaning ‘longing, desiring, yearning’), it speaks of something quite different. In Gen. 2 dabaq comes after marriage. In Gen. 34 dabaq comes after intercourse outside of marriage. In Gen. 2 dabaq follows genuine agape. In Gen. 34 dabaq follows unrestrained eros, which develops into genuine agape for Dinah, as sort of an aftereffect on the rapist.” Ibid., 355.
The second way that one can notice the disregard for Jacob’s patriarchal leadership was Shechem’s approach toward Dinah. Perhaps, the narrator intended, within v. 2, to show that Shechem intended to entice Dinah from her people. One wonders if he loved or lusted for Dinah.\textsuperscript{215} If Shechem had truly loved Dinah his approach to her and her father would have been different.\textsuperscript{216} He would have attempted to discover how to gain the favor of Jacob, as societal norms dictated. Lyn Bechtel makes this argument well as he notes that every people group have their boundaries within which new couples should proceed.\textsuperscript{217} Bechtel explains the importance of such boundaries saying: “Boundaries are powerful because they hold the group and its identity together, and dangerous because they can be violated, threatening the existence of the group and

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\item Mathews observes, “That Shechem will precipitously seek an arrangement for Dinah’s marriage is explained by the lustful passion that he had for her. His sexual tryst resulted in a greater determination to secure her.” Mathews, \textit{Genesis 11:27–50}: 26, 593. It appears similar in some ways to the narrative of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam 13). Mathews continues, “The verse displays the affectionate intensity of Shechem’s love by its repetitious and vivid language. He ‘clung’ (dabaq) to her, ‘loved’ (’ahab) her, and spoke to her ‘heart’ (leb). This last expression indicates his attempt to comfort her and perhaps woo her.” Mathews, \textit{Genesis 11:27–50}: 26, 593. Hamilton contests, “Here the narrator says that Shechem defiled (’tame) Dinah. Hamilton, \textit{The Book of Genesis Chapter 18–50}, 356. Hamilton explains this concept as he records, ‘Although not a frequent use of the verb, tame’ is sometimes used for the violation of chastity. . . . In the Old Testament this verb might describe a person who has contacted impurity through such things as skin diseases, bodily emissions, or touching something dead. It is usually translated ‘unclean,’ but it does not mean sinful, though it does mean exclusion from the camp until cleanness is restored.” Ibid.

\item Hamilton notes, “The sequence (he) saw her [wayyar’ ’otah] . . . he seized her [wayyiqqah ’otah] recalls the same sequence in the episode concerning the sons of God and the daughters of men (wayyir’u . . . wayyiqhu lahem, 6:2). The same order occurs with Eve and the forbidden fruit in the Garden (wattere’ . . . wattiqqah, 3:6). First comes the desire, then the action when the lust is not checked.” Hamilton, \textit{The Book of Genesis Chapter 18–50}, 354. Mathews notes, “When rape occurs in Deut 22:23–24, 25–27, 28–29; and 2 Sam 13:11–14 the verb hazaq ‘seized’ occurs. In the case of Deut 22:25–27, where a virgin is raped in the countryside, there is not shame for her action, thus the absence of ‘nh in the description. In the Samuel passage, however, Tamar’s rape carries shame (’nh, v. 14; here ’nh precedes skb) because she had sexual relations with a family member, thus a ‘disgrace’ (herpa) that Tamar must bear.” Mathews, \textit{Genesis 11:27–50}: 26, 591.

\item Lyn Bechtel asserts, “In group-orientation it is important that the closely knit group and the households within it have well-articulated and highly valued boundaries as well as carefully guarded entrances and exits, because boundaries and orifices are associated with both power and danger. There is purity inside the group and impurity outside the group.” Lyn M. Bechtel, “What If Dinah Is Not Raped? (Genesis 34)” \textit{Journal for the Study of the Old Testament} 62 (1994): 22.
\end{itemize}
the identity of the members. Boundaries are related to geography, ethnicity, the correct ancestral lineage and most importantly with allegiance.” These limitations are what make a group the way it is. To ignore or overlook a group’s boundaries is injurious to that group. Sexual intercourse is very much a prominent element within these confines. Bechtel states, “Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman is not perceived in romantic or spiritual terms, but in terms of its perpetuation of the family/group.”

The third aspect of how Jacob’s patriarchal leadership is disrespected is through the action of his sons. Jacob’s sons did not appear to have any respect for their father when they reacted violently, not just toward the Hivites, but toward their father. Fleishman maintains

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218 Ibid.

219 Joseph Fleishman maintains, “Apparently the people of Shechem did not consider the sexual relationship between Shechem and Dinah a felony. They felt that the problem created by the man’s injuring Dinah’s honor could be resolved if he paid her family a dowry whose sum would be agreed upon by both sides, after which the woman would be considered a respectable woman. But Jacob’s sons viewed with great concern not only the sexual contact between Dinah and Shechem, but also the fact that the people of Shechem did not regard the violation of their daughter’s sexual honor as a serious violation of their clan’s honor.” Joseph Fleishman, “Why Did Simeon and Levi Rebuke Their Father in Genesis 34:31? Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages 26/2 (2000): 105.

220 Bechtel notes, “In group-oriented societies like ancient Israel, sexual intercourse is shameful to a woman (1) when it violates existing marital, family or community bonding and obligation or (2) when there is not prospect of its leading to marital or family bonding and obligation.” Bechtel, “What If Dinah Is Not Raped? (Genesis 34),” 24. Later he states, “The sexual intercourse involves two unbonded people, with no mention of violence on the part of Shechem or of a cry for help on the part of Dinah. But Shechem is an outsider, a ‘prince’ of the Canaanites, so there is no possibility of marital and family bonding and obligation with this outsider.” Ibid., 27. Then he explains, “Dbq (to bond) is the same word that is used in Gen 2:24 to characterize the process of becoming ‘one flesh,’ a marital bonding that is both sexual and psychological.” Ibid., 28. Thus, his deduction: “This outside pollution or outside impurity defiles the whole Jacobite community. It is considered ‘a foolish thing’ that ‘is not done’ because it violates the ideals and customs of the tribal group that attempt to preserve the group boundaries and continue the existence of the group.” Ibid., 32.

221 Ibid., 22.

222 Fleishman points out that “the presence of the clan head, Jacob, at the negotiations with Hamor, and the lack of opposition on his part to the compromise suggested, give the agreement legal validity. Jacob agreed, albeit silently, to the marriage between his daughter and Shechem. Then his sons reacted by deceiving him, Hamor and Shechem.” Fleishman, “Why Did Simeon and Levi Rebuke Their Father in Genesis 34:31?” 110.
that Jacob’s “honor as the head of the clan suffered a serious and painful injury, both within the clan and among others.”  

He makes this assertion by noting that “one of the strongest expressions of a father’s authority in a patriarchal society is the privilege he has to determine whom his daughter can marry.”

Jacob’s sons had no regard for their father’s leadership nor life for that matter. Jacob, on the other hand, was willing to compromise – live and let live. Bechtel remarks that Jacob “displays the proper group-oriented behavior. He is quiescent, passive, dependent on his community and cooperative. He does not carry out independent action, but waits for mutual support. He cooperates with Hamor; he is willing to listen.” Brueggemann states, “If Jacob had had his way, the settlement with Shechem would have been honored. But the unresolved ending hints that a more sectarian and destructive settlement prevailed. The issue was to become a continuing one for Israel.” The hasty and violent actions of Jacob’s sons to exact revenge and to establish their position within the family of Jacob, would haunt the family for generations.

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223 Ibid.

224 Ibid. He adds: “The girl’s brothers are also entitled to conduct negotiations in order that their sister marry, but this entitlement is not an autonomous right; it derives from the father’s authority.” Ibid.

225 Kidner maintains, “Crudely performed, circumcision could be quite incapacitating, particularly after two or three days. The massacre was no superhuman feat, even if Simeon and Levi acted alone (the remaining brothers seem to have joined them only for the looting and rounding up). Kidner, Genesis, 174. Keil and Delitzsch add to the violence of the act as they contend that “the deception they practiced, the abuse of the covenant sign of circumcision as a means of gratifying their revenge, and the extension of that revenge to the whole town, together with the plundering of the slain, were crimes deserving of the strongest reprobation.” Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 315.


228 Brueggemann states, “In this narrative, Jacob is the seasoned voice of maturity. He has lived a long time. He has not flinched from conflicts as they have come to him. But now he rebukes such a childish religion which will endanger its own life rather than face realities. There is, of course, a place for passion and zeal. But Jacob
Genesis 35:22 – Reuben Seduces Bilhah, His Step-mother

Gen 35:22 is a report of Reuben, Leah and Jacob’s oldest son, enticing Bilhah, Rachel’s maid, sexually soon after Rachel’s death. This account is a demonstration of Reuben using the “one flesh” union to promote his position within the family. Reuben attempted to accomplish this by taking his step-mother’s maid (Bilhah was also a step-mother), and using her as a pawn in his effort to usurp his father’s authority. The reason for this hypothesis is that the information concerning Reuben and Bilhah falls in the narrative about Rachel’s death. What other purpose did the narrator have for placing this information at the juncture? The point being, Bilhah was Rachel’s handmaid, so if Reuben takes Bilhah as his wife it would seem to elevate his familial position. Thus, Reuben sought to supersede his father’s position.229

Key Word

םָלֶך

The key word for this study is the word מָלֶך. The word מָלֶך is used thirty seven times in the Old Testament to express the idea of “concubine.”230 Nahor had a “concubine” (Gen 22:24); Abraham had “concubines” (Gen 25:6); Jacob had “concubines” (Gen 30:4, 9; 37:2); Reuben “lay” with his father’s concubine (Gen 35:22); Eliphaz, Esau’s son, had a concubine (Gen

recognizes his marginal, minority position in Shechem. He counsels, therefore, a low profile and an effort to get along with more powerful neighbors. His response is not one of great faith, but of clear-headed pragmatism.” Brueggemann, Genesis, 278.

229 Ibid.

230 Victor Hamilton claims that the word was an original Hebrew concept. He states that “the word comes from the Philistines, a Mediterranean people who both had contacts with the Hebrews and who were of Indo-European stock. Note that from the days of the Conquest on, almost everybody in the Old Testament of whom it is said he had a concubine is from either the tribe of Judah or Benjamin, those in closest contact with the Philistines.” Victor Hamilton, מָלֶך, in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 618.
A “concubine” was a legitimate wife.\textsuperscript{231} Even though the Old Testament does not explicitly discuss the legal position of the “concubine,” Ex 21:10–11 sets forth a set of guidelines for a “secondary” wife.\textsuperscript{232} A “secondary” wife had the same general rights and privileges as the “first” wife. K. Engelken points out that “in the period of the patriarchs and judges, concubinage was probably perceived as a natural institution, while later it tended to be reserved to kings.”\textsuperscript{233} Bilhah was Jacob’s wife, and Reuben had no right to her. Yet, he apparently took her to legitimize family position.

**Key Phrase**

The key phrase for this passage of Scripture that can be found in Gen 35:22 is “Israel [Jacob] heard it” (יִשָּׂרֵאֵל). The tragedy behind these two words is poignant.\textsuperscript{234} How did Israel

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\textsuperscript{231} Victor Hamilton comments, “A concubine was a true wife, thought of secondary rank. . . . The concubine was not a kept mistress, and did not cohabit with a man unless married to him.” Victor P. Hamilton, “בָּנָיָה,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 724. Elsewhere Hamilton states, “Normally the concubine is an auxiliary wife. She is subordinated to the ‘issa and is a substitute birth-mother at the disposition of her mistress (Hagar, Zilpah, Bilhah). On the other hand, neither is the concubine a slave, and that ranks above an ‘ama or sipha.” Hamilton, “בָּנָיָה,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 618–619.

\textsuperscript{232} Ex 21:10–11 states, “If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.”


\textsuperscript{234} George G. Nicol accentuates the fact that “at the end of the Jacob narrative proper, Reuben is said to have had sexual intercourse with Bilhah, his father’s concubine and the slave of Rachel, the favorite wife whom Jacob had always loved most deeply, and who, according to the immediately preceding narrative, had only recently died in childbirth.” George G. Nicol. “Genesis 39:32 and 35:22a Reuben’s Reversal,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 31/2 (1980): 536–537.
hear about the episode between Reuben and Bilhah? The text is silent. However, that Jacob heard
about the actions and did nothing is perplexing.

Jacob’s wife, Rachel, died during childbirth. It was during that occurrence that his oldest
son, Reuben, took Jacob’s “concubine,” Bilhah, and had sex with her. The anticipated reaction
from Jacob was nil. Wenham notes that “failing to report any action on Jacob’s part, the narrator
has left a gap that no one can miss.” When Jacob should have reacted he did not. His sons had
little or no respect for his headship of the family. This must have been embarrassing. Nicol
points out that embarrassment saying: “This incident must therefore be considered to have
caused deep humiliation to Jacob, who not only had been bereaved of his favorite wife (Gen
30:19), but while still mourning her had been usurped in the bed of her slave—here described as
his concubine—from whom he might otherwise have expected physical consolation.”

Apparently, the narrator wished to convey that Reuben’s intentions were meant to be harmful to
his father. The family positioning within the house of Jacob had indeed changed drastically.

235 Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 328.


237 Nicol observes, “In Israel the act of having sexual intercourse with one’s father’s concubine was
considered tantamount to usurping his power or authority. In the story of Absalom’s rebellion, Ahitophel, when he
instructed Absalom to take possession of the ten concubines who had been left behind by David in Jerusalem (2 Sam
16:20–22), apparently regarded the action as politically significant and providing a rallying point for Absalom’s
supporters.” Ibid.
Genesis 35:22 in the Wake of Research

The episode of Gen 35:22 is intriguing.\textsuperscript{238} Reuben’s exploits were dastardly and clearly show his attempt to usurp his father’s position as head of the family.\textsuperscript{239} One has to question what caused him to do such a thing. Brueggemann helps answer this question as he contends, “The action of Reuben is not to be evaluated simply as an issue of sexual morality, but as a political issue. The taking of the father’s concubines is an attempt to seize power, claim the leadership and, in fact, announce that the old man is dead (cf. 2 Sam 16:20 –23).”\textsuperscript{240} Hamilton points to the story of Absalom and David as a similar example. He writes, “The same idea is operating when Ahithophel urges Absalom to take possession of his father’s ten concubines (2 Sam 16:20 –22). Through this move Absalom is making clear his intentions to usurp his father’s royal authority.”\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{238} Sarna states, “This incident is directly linked to the foregoing because it is Rachel’s demise that presents the occasion for Reuben’s act. By violating Bilhah, Reuben makes sure that she cannot supplant or even rival his mother’s position of chief wife now that Rachel is dead. As a statement in Shabbat 55b expresses it, ‘He resented his mother’s humiliation. He said, “If my mother’s sister was a rival to my mother, must the maid of my mother’s sister be a rival to my mother?”’ In this connection, it is interesting that Reuben had earlier been involved in the attempt to get his father to restore the conjugal rights of his mother (30:14–16).” Sarna, Genesis, 244. Later, Sarna contends, that Reuben’s “move is more political than lustful.” Ibid., 245.

\textsuperscript{239} Mathews notes, “Levitical law reflected the customary boundaries established for proper sexual relations. The principle was the forbiddance of sexual relations with a ‘close relative’ (Lev 18:6); this restriction included relations with a father’s wife (Lev 18:8), which required the death penalty for the offenders (Lev 20:11).” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 628.

\textsuperscript{240} Brueggemann, Genesis, 284.

\textsuperscript{241} Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50, 387.
Genesis 38:2 – Judah Takes a Canaanite Wife

Genesis 38 is a conspicuous story that states that Judah departed from his family. Perhaps he departed from his family so that he could find a wife, and at the same time change the mechanics for how the family existed. The text unmistakably states that he went to visit an Adullamite. During the time of his visit, he saw a daughter of a certain Canaanite. Judah took that Canaanite to be his wife (Gen 38:2). The concern that surfaces is Judah taking a wife for himself. If Judah had been faithful in allowing his father to find a wife for him, it seems bizarre that the narrative states that Judah took a wife. There are numerous usages of חָלָה express the idea: “to take, seize, grab” in the sense of “taking for oneself.” Verse two states that he took this woman and חָלָה אֵלַי הָגִיה “went in to her.” This is a euphemistic phrase stating that Judah found a woman and had sex with her. M. E. Andrew makes a compelling argument as he asserts, “Judah went down (yarad) from his brothers and turned (nata) to an Adullamite.” One has to consider why Judah went down from his brothers to Adullamite.

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242 G. R. H. Wright states, “The biblical Romance of Joseph which is basically non-historical in character contains within its compass as it is constituted in The Book of Genesis (37–50) a surprising insertion, the story of Tamar. The presence of this ‘historical’ anecdote in such a context has disturbed the commentators.” G. R. H. Wright, “The Positioning of Genesis 38,” Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 94/4 (1982): 523.

243 Andrew states that “the alien sphere is presented impersonally in the way Judah takes (lqah) the daughter of a Canaanite and goes into (bo’) her (v. 2). The verbs have this effect here since they are in the context of the woman not even being named; she is a mere vehicle for bearing sons. Her father is named, Shua, and his is said to be a Canaanite, so that when it is personal, it is the alien sphere which is highlighted.” M. E. Andrew, “Moving from Death to Life. Verbs of Motion in the Story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38,” Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 105/2 (1993): 263.

244 Ibid., 262. Andrew contends, “It is possible that both the verb yarad and the theme of separation from one’s own people form a link with the Story of Joseph. Certainly the end of Gen 37 shows that yarad can be used for a drastic family separation because Jacob refuses to be comforted and says, ‘I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol’ (v. 35).” Ibid. Robert Alter enhances this idea by writing: “‘He went down from’ (38:1) has the purpose of connecting this separation of one brother from the rest with Joseph’s separation, transmitted then with the same verb root in 39:1: ‘Now Joseph had been taken down (hophal of yarad) to Egypt.” Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 6.
Genesis 38 appears to be a textual note of interest, for it breaks with the storyline of Genesis 37–50. The chapters of Genesis 37–50 predominately disclose the life of Joseph. Yet, Genesis 38 imparts information about Judah and his heirs. This information seems to be a narrative more about the idea of the breakdown of family relationships, in light of polygamy, than the life of Judah.

In Genesis 37, Joseph was distinctive to his father, but his brothers appear to be distant. Gen 37:3 presents this as it states, “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.” This narrative appears to be comparable to Gen 29:15–35. Later in the narrator, Joseph had a dream that stated that he would rule over his brothers. It was because of these occurrences that the brothers decided to kill him. This opportunity came when Jacob sent Joseph to checkup on his brothers in a distant land. Reuben stopped the plot to kill Joseph when he stepped in and encouraged the brothers to cast Joseph into a pit (Gen 37:21–22). It was his intent to return Joseph to his father – unharmed. Apparently, Reuben left before he could act, and Judah urged his brothers to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites (Gen 37:25–37). Judah’s conduct illustrated his disregard toward his father and his father’s way of life. This information seems to become relevant for Genesis 38; for the narrator placed the news of Judah’s departure to take a wife on the heels of Judah urging his brothers to sell Joseph into captivity. This information provides an image sexual disharmony and violation within the norm as far as Gen 1:26–28 is concerned.

**Genesis 38:2 in the Wake of Research**

Families can be complicated infrastructures. The narrative of Jacob and his family is a model of the involvement that takes place to exist. There are many features, and there is little
question, after reading Gen 29:15–30:24 about this observation. Jacob’s attitude set the tone for his family’s actions. He made more of Rachel and her son Joseph than he did Leah and her children. This seems to have created fissure within the family, especially with Leah’s children. The instances are noteworthy. Reuben, the eldest of Leah’s sons, took Bilhah (Rachel’s maid and Jacob’s wife), and had sex with her. Levi and Simeon, the third and second of Leah’s sons, took a sword and killed all the male neighbors three days after they had been circumcised (Gen 34:25). They had no regard for the possible covenant that their father, Jacob, had made with Hamor. To make matters worse, Simeon took a Canaanite as a wife (46:10). Judah, the fourth of Leah’s sons, after Joseph had been sold, left his family and formed a new family. However, the new family that he established was from a Canaanite woman. Wenham reminds one that “Judah’s marriage to a Canaanite provided the subsequent birth of three sons. Though the narrative does not underline it here, marrying Canaanites was hardly respectable in Israel.”

Thus, it appears that Judah took the opportunity to take a Canaanite woman and go to her. In other words, it seems as though Judah did as his brothers had done – had no respect for their father or his tradition. In fact, Wenham suggests, “Judah’s marriage may have been based on mere lust.” But, one could argue that this lust was not an ordinary lust, rather Judah’s act was one of “retaliation” against his father. As a consequence, he had a basis to bring some sort of comfort to himself. So, one can presume that Jacob probably felt great disparagement about his son’s marriage. Perhaps, Judah had been driven from his family and subsequently acted the way that he did because it seemed to him that his family was shattered.


246 Ibid., 366.
Summary

This section was devised to survey the key words and phrases of Gen 28:6–9; Gen 29:31–30:24; Gen 31:1–31; Gen 35:22; and Gen 38:2 to demonstrate how the ideal union can be used inappropriately to further one’s position within the family. Upon the initial consideration of Gen 2:24, it was determined that Gen 2:24 provides the underpinning of the ideal union between the man and the woman – unity and solidarity. The texts, used in this chapter, demonstrate that the progeny of Adam abandoned that ideal union for family positioning. Some of the results are: 1) Esau married Mahalath, who was a Canaanite family member from Ishmael, to gain a blessing from his father; 2) Leah and Rachel defied the premise of the ideal union by including their maids within the marriage of Jacob; 3) Dinah, Simeon, and Levi disregarded Jacob even humiliated him by showing their independent position within the family; 4) Reuben showed complete disdain toward his father and an evident usurping attitude by having a sexual encounter with Bilhah. 5) Judah left his father’s house, and married a Canaanite. Each of these examples are incidents of family positioning where the various individuals appropriated their own ideal over the ideal of the “one flesh” union. These actions demonstrate another type of deviation from the “one flesh” union. Thus, Gen 28:6–9; Gen 29:31–30:24; Gen 31:1–31; Gen 35:22; and Gen 38:2 can be understood as an affront to the divine intent. In addition, these actions lead to issues that may be more in line with the idea of the breakdown of family relationships that, in turn, may lead to sexual disharmony that violate the norms of Gen 1:26–28.
Chapter Three

Unions Dictated by Lust

Gen 2:24 introduces the foundation of a “one flesh” relationship. As a consequence, one can begin to see God’s divine intention – the ideal union. God’s intent was for one man and one woman to unite as “one flesh” so that they formed a unit of continuity and solidarity. The sex that they shared with each other was to be a means to internalize this idea. According to Gen 2:24, sex was designed to take place between a man and woman – the two “shall become one flesh.” Perhaps, the picture of continuity and solidarity, even within the confines of sex, was to provide an arrangement that gave accountability between the two, and failure would become more difficult. But, temptations offered by the lust for other people presented men and women opportunities that pulled them in different directions. This chapter examines unions that deviate from the ideal union due to lust. The unions guided by lust to be examined are: Gen 6:1–3; Gen 9:18–25; Gen 19:1–11; Gen 38:11–30; and Gen 39:7–20. Care is supplied to the appropriate exegesis of those texts, then a comparison to the standard set forth in Gen 2:24 is discussed.

Lust

In the Bible, there are several Hebrew words and verses that present the thought of lust. Moreover, there are also words that give overtones for the concept of lust. Yet, these

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247 פָּרָת – “desire,” “long,” “lust,” “covet,” “wait longingly,” “crave,” “want,” (Num 11:4; Deut 5:21; 12:15, 20; 14:26; 1 Sam 2:16; 1 Kgs 11:37; Job 23:12; Prov 23:3, 6; 21:10, 26; 31:4; Amos 5:18); פָּרָת – “to desire,” “longing,” “lust” (Gen 34:2, 8; Ex 27:17; 38:17, 28; Deut 7:7; 10:15; 21:11; הָעַר – “long for,” “yearn,” “desire” (Ps 119:131); מָצַּב – “long after,” “lust for” (Ps 61:1); מָצַּב – “desire,” “request,” “wish,” (Ex 18:7; 1 Sam 1:17, 20, 27, 28; 8:10; 20:6; 2 Sam 3:13; 20:18; 1 Kgs 2:16, 20, 22; Ps 109:10); הָעַר – “desire,” “long after,” (Ps 119:40, 174); מָצַּב – “longing,” “desire,” “appetite,” “ardent desire,” “lust” (119:20); מָצַּב – “desire,” “request,” “longing,” “appetite” (Gen 3:16; 4:7; Song of Solomon 7:10).
words do not specifically describe the word lust. Instead, the words offer an ambiguous image of the idea of lust. Thus, to find a word that explicitly defines the idea of lust can be challenging. But, there is one word for lust found in the texts of this research that seems to capture the notion of lust – ל המלאק.

The word ל מלאק appears to be the one word that offers some demarcation in context for how a person is compelled into action by the thought of lust. Even then, ל מלאק has to be coupled with another word to convey a meaning. G. Wallis notes, “The association of the root hasq with the subject נפש nepes allows it to be applied to individual bonds: between a man and a woman (Gen 34:8).” The idea seems to be that a person develops an innate desire to cling to another particular person. Initially, this idea seems to correspond with Gen 2:24, but upon further review it appears that lust does not resemble the ideal. The desire caused by lust appears to

248 ל מלאק (Ex 15:9; Ps 78:18); נפש nepes (Ps 81:13); תרצות (Ps 78:30); רות רות (Prov 6:25); חכם (Ps 106:14); משלי (Ezek 23:7, 9, 12; Jer 4:30).

249 G. W. Knight, III remarks that the word lust “once meant only a strong desire or craving, in a good or bad sense. Now it is used in the sense of craving that which is forbidden, especially sexual passion. . . . The Old Testament uses the concept for an inordinate desire for anything—e.g., the desire for specific food in the Exodus experience—and particularly for an intense misdirection of love, whether the individual man to a woman (Prov 6:25) or the nation of Israel from God her loving husband to her lovers (Ezekiel 23).” G. W. Knight, III, “Lust,” in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 664–665.

250 David Talley notes, “This word is attested in Judean, Aramaic, saddle; Mishna Hebrew (1) hang on, stick to, and (2) press lips together, kiss; and Arabic ‘asiga and ‘asiga, hang on, love passionately/fervently, and pursue enthusiastically.” David Talley, “ל מלאק,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 318.

251 Wallis continues: “The context equates the meaning with dabaq be (Gen 34:3). Unlike dabaq, hasaq always has a positive sense, never a hostile sense like ‘stick to in pursuit.’ Deut 21:11 takes account of such human bonds, permitting marriage (laqah li‘isa) with a foreign captive to whom one is attracted in this way.” G. Wallis, “ל מלאק,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 262.

252 Talley comments that “the idea is to set one’s heart on something or someone, which exhibits a desire to be involved with a person or a task or to develop some type of relationship. For affection between people, the term is used of a man’s desire for a woman.” Talley, “ל מלאק,” 318.
become the controlling factor that leads one into action. If one does not to establish an ideal union, then he forms a union because of a personal, fleshly desire (Gen 34:2–4). Wallis contends that כָּרָה “does not suggest a sudden surge of emotion; it presupposes not just an unconditional erotic attraction, but also a reasoned and unconditional decision.”²⁵³ The man deliberates his actions before he carries through with them (Gen 34:3, 8; Deut 21:11).

**Genesis 6:1–3 – The Multiplying of Man**

Gen 6:1–3 is an intriguing story about humanity. This account tells a tale about how mankind began to multiply on the earth, apparently at an alarming rate. According to this passage, the reason for this great multiplication of life was, the sons of God saw the daughters of men as beautiful women who were desirable to take for acts of sex. Yet, the sex that they participated in was displeasing to God. Seemingly, men took women, not to build an ideal union, but to have sex, and as a consequence a population explosion occurred.

**Key Word**

בבר

The key word of this survey is בבר. It is most often used to express the ideas of: “becoming many,” “great,” or “ten thousand.”²⁵⁴ The first time that this word is used is here in

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²⁵³ Wallis, “כָּרָה,” 263. Wallis provides two examples: “Just as Shechem longed for Dinah so much that he asked his father to request her in marriage (Gen 34:3, 8), just as the warrior determines to take a foreign slave as his wife (Deut 21:11). Ibid.

Gen 6:1 – “when men began to rbb on the face of the earth.” William White helps to disclose the meaning of rbb as he notes that the first time אשת occurs is that it “appears in Gen 6:1 and many other passages in the sense of ‘become many.’” He suggests that אשת is used in the sense of indicating there has been a rapid growth of the human population.

**Key Phrase**

The key phrase that can be found in Gen 6:1–3 is בֶּן-לוֹהֵים (“sons of God”). This term seems to have created a considerable amount of bewilderment over the last two millennia. What exactly is meant by the term בֶּן-לוֹהֵים? Hamilton notes, “The narrator’s assumption is that they are readily identifiable by his audience.” However, if this is the case, time has provided a problem; for it seems that the debated centers on the idea surrounding the “sons of God,” and not on the ultimate outcome. There are three possibilities: 1) semi-mythological creatures/angels 2) kings/governors 3) Sethites.

The first possibility is that “sons of God” represent mythological creatures. In reality, these figures are not “mythological,” but instead are angels that had sexual liaisons with humans. Mathews comments, “As angelic, celestial beings, the ‘sons of God’ defied God by

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255 White, אשת, 826.

256 Ibid. Andrew Hill emphasizes the idea of quick growth as he contends that בָּר˫ “denotes the rapid growth of human (Gen 6:1) or animal populations (Ex23:29).” Andrew E. Hill, אשת, in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1034.


258 Rick Marrs observes, “The sons of God are best understood as divine members of Yahweh’s heavenly council. This concept is well documented both in non-Israelite and Israelite sources. Thus, Genesis 6:1–4 records a time when several divine beings, in willful disregard of the separation imposed on creation by Yahweh, transgressed his will by entering the human realm and creating havoc.” Rick Marrs, “The Sons of God (Genesis 6:1–4)” *Restoration Quarterly* 23/4 (1980): 219.
moving outside their appointed realm and marrying (molesting?) human ‘daughters.’” Some of the proponents of this view are Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen. In addition, it can be found in 1 Enoch 6:2 ff. and in Jubilees 5:1, and possibly 2 Peter 2:4–5 as well as Jude 6. Wenham comments that there are three leading reasons why theologians support this idea. He states, “First, in the Old Testament ‘sons of God’ refer to heavenly, godlike creatures (Ps 29:1, Job 1:6). Second, ‘sons of God’ is to be seen as a contrast to ‘daughters of man’ – meaning that ‘sons of God’ married the ‘daughters of men.’ Third, in Ugaritic literature ‘sons of God’ refers to members of the divine pantheon.”

The second option is that “sons of God” represents kings/governors or perhaps aristocrats. Waltke explains this as he conveys, “The interpretation that sees this designation as referring to royal tyrannical successors of Lamech finds historical support in an ancient Jewish interpretation that the ‘sons of God’ were nobles, aristocrats, and princes who married girls outside their social status and took great numbers of them into their harems.” D. J. A. Clines asserts, “The ‘sons of God’ are intelligible therefore in the present context as the royal successors of Lamech, taking for themselves (ζηπη) wives of as many as they chose.” The idea behind this presentation is that it follows suit with Gen 4:19. Aristocratic men began to take “multiple”

259 Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 325. Mathews clarifies the term “sons of God” by stating: “In the interpretation elohim is taken as a proper noun (‘God’) or as a genitive of attribute (indicating quality), where it refers to a class of beings, giving the sense of ‘divine beings.’ In this latter sense it means they are of the realm of the heavenly (angels) in contrast to the ‘daughters of men,’ whose realm is terrestrial.” Ibid.


wives to show their status within their communities. Mathews expounds on this concept as he notes, “The word ‘elohim has a broader usage than the common meanings ‘God’ and ‘divine.’ There is ample evidence for taking ’elohim as human ‘judges’ in the Old Testament.”\textsuperscript{263} An example for this usage can be found in Ps 82:1, 6 in which human rulers are referred to as ’elohim with the implication that they are “sons of God.”

The third selection is that the phrase “sons of God” embodies Seth’s descendants. Waltke states, “The traditional Christian interpretation since the third century, supported by Luther and Calvin, understood the sons of God and the daughters of men to be the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain, and the sin of the mingling of the two seeds, defiling the line.”\textsuperscript{264} While Waltke rejects this idea, there are others that appear to be partial to this notion. Hamilton is one commentator that seems to be fond of this idea by suggesting that “the sons of God are the godly Sethites and the daughters of humankind are the ungodly Cainites.”\textsuperscript{265} Hamilton continues with this line of reasoning, but he also suggests, “It is possible to reverse this identification and see the daughters of men as Sethites and the sons of God as Cainites (really ‘Eveites’).”\textsuperscript{266}

While each of these are intriguing, it is not the purpose of this paper to resolve the issue of the phrase bêne ‘elohim (“sons of God”). The purpose of this research is to note that the “sons of God,” whomever they were, acted in a manner that was not suitable for God’s ideal order.


\textsuperscript{265} Hamilton, \textit{The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1–17}, 264–265.

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid.
Genesis 6:1–3 in the Wake of Research

There is one thing that can be ascertained from Gen 6:1–3, and that is something took place during the period specified in Gen 6:1 that angered God. The manner in which the words are placed together seem to indicate that mankind began to walk without any regards for God’s ideal pattern for man and woman. Allen Ross states, “The story describes these ‘sons of God’ as a lusty, powerful lot, striving for fame and fertility.”267 Sarna enriches the image as he insists, “The implication is that they were driven by lust, so that external beauty, and not character, was their sole criterion in the selection of mates.”268

The quick population increase was not through the ideal paradigm that God had provided for the man and woman. The sin is that men took wives for themselves (polygamy), in the sense of being motivated by lust.269 Hamilton concedes that “the stimulus for the behavior of the sons of God was that the human daughters were attractive.”270 A fierce attraction, coupled with a weak consideration of God’s ideal union led to a rapid population increase which also increased degradation upon the earth. Leupold provides a clearer picture as he comments, “When God’s children lose sight of such basic distinctions and look about only for the pretty faces and the


269 Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1–17, 263. Van Gemeren notes that “the context gives reason for believing that the wickedness was so great that it had to be dealt with.” Van Gemeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4,” 328.

270 Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1–17, 265. Hamilton contends that “the description of the sons’ activities is reminiscent of Eve’s in the garden. She saw that the tree was ‘good’ (ki tob), and these sons saw that the daughters of men were ‘attractive’ or ‘good’ (ki tobot).” Ibid.
shapely forms, then surely, degeneracy has set in.”

Thus mankind was testing the very bountiful patience of God. And the Lord warned them saying, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.”

God initiated a union between the man and the woman for His own purpose. Atkinson rightly asserts, “It is God who sets the boundaries for human life. There are certain things human beings may not do if they are to retain their humanity. . . . There are overpowering forces within the world which drive us to overstep God’s bounds.”

When man steps outside of God’s boundaries, he brings judgment upon himself. The lust for women pushed the Sons of God, whomever they were, beyond the standards God had set forth and God promptly warned of a coming judgment.

**Genesis 9:18–25 – Noah Curses Canaan**

Gen 9:18–25 provides a report of what happened to Noah and his family soon after the waters dried up from the face of the earth, and they left the ark. Noah went out to become a farmer of a vineyard. Sometime after his grapes ripened, he apparently made some wine, drank it, and became drunk. Once he became drunk, he stripped himself of his clothing. Ham saw his nakedness, and reported it to his brothers. Somehow, Ham used his father’s nakedness to shame


273 Wenham rationalizes why God provides boundaries for man as he argues that it is possible that the author of Genesis wanted man to know “the life-giving power of God, on which every creature is entirely dependent.” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 141. Wenham elaborates on his comment as he writes: “It is called the ‘breath of life’ (2:7) or ‘the spirit of life’ (6:17; 7:15) and the phrase ‘my spirit’ is used again in Ezek 37:14.” Ibid.
Noah; for Noah cursed Ham’s son, Canaan. The reason, then, that this account is put under the heading “Unions Dictated by Lust” is because the text leads the reader to understand that when Ham saw his father’s nakedness, something happened beyond just accidentally seeing him naked. Whether it was a lust for personal gain or a lust for some type of sexual gratification, Ham did more than just stumble upon his naked father, which explains the harsh reaction of Noah toward Ham’s descendants.

Key Word

The word for this investigation is הֵרֵעַ. The word הֵרֵעַ is used sixty-eight times in the Old Testament. The word הֵרֵעַ was used in a formulaic manner and was to be a signifier of wrong doing that demanded a curse. Thus, this formulaic usage of הֵרֵעַ points to one main

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274 Victor Hamilton stresses that one must approach הֵרֵעַ with caution. The reason: “A striking fact is that there is such a proliferation of words in Hebrew which have been generally all translated ‘to curse.’ The list includes at least six: הָרָע, qalal, ‘ala, qabab, nagab, za’am. To group all of them together under the one general English equivalent, ‘to curse,’ is much too superficial.” Victor P. Hamilton, “הֵרֵעַ,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 75.

275 The usage of הֵרֵעַ: fifty-five times in the qal (forty times in the form of the passive participle); seven times in piel; once as a niphal; five times as a noun.

276 C. A. Keller comments, “Yahweh is the absolute lord over all ‘arur declaring. He himself makes people and animals ‘arur, if he determines to do so, in that he speaks the fateful word (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 12:3; Jer 11:3; Mal 2:2), and one knows that his m’era pursues some people (Deut 28:20; Prov 3:33). Above all, he can convert the human baruk declaration, even that of the priest, into the opposite (Mal 2:2), or he can even give a magician, preparing to declare ‘arur, the commission to do the opposite (Num 22–24). Therefore, when declaring someone ‘arur, the individual makes the affected one ‘arur ‘before Yahweh’ (1 Sam 26:19).” C. A. Keller, “הֵרֵעַ,” in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 181. Later he accentuates by stating: “The potential sphere of disaster that one creates by declaring ‘arur is limited by the direction of Yahweh. The one who moves beyond the sphere of activity determined by God’s direction, i.e., the one who acts within the realm of that forbidden by Yahweh, is ‘arur, persecuted by disaster.” Ibid. Josef Scharbert states that “the ‘arur-formula, formed with the qal passive participle, occupies a very special position. It is a substantival expression beginning with the predicate ‘arur followed by the subject, which can be a pronoun of the 2nd or 3rd person singular or plural, or a person, or a thing. This formula can be expanded by a reason for the curse, or by a more precise explanation of the nature of the curse.” Josef Scharbert, “הֵרֵעַ,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 408. Scharbert later states, “We must assume that the original Sitz im Leben of
premise – man had disregarded his relationship to God, committed a wrong which demanded a curse as punishment. Scharbert maintains that “the ‘arur-formula is the most powerful ‘decree’ expressed by an authority, and by means of it a man or group that has committed a serious transgression against the community or against a legitimate authority (God, parents) is delivered over to misfortune.” Thus, one can conclude through this formulaic use of הֵרֶע שֶׁאָרָה that Ham somehow used the nakedness of his father in a wrongful manner which in turn, when discovered, demanded a curse as retribution for his actions.

Key Phrase

The key phrase for Gen 9:18–25 is – and Ham saw (אֲרֻעַ, הֵרֶע אֲרֻעַ) “the nakedness of his father” (אֲרֻעַ אֲרֻעַ אֲרֻעַ). The idea of a person being “naked,” according to the Bible, is a shameful matter

277 Hamilton states, “It will be observed that the majority of ‘curse’ saying with ‘arar fall into one of three general categories: (1) the declaration of punishments (Gen 3:14, 17); (2) the utterance of threats (Jer 11:3; 17:5; Mal 1:14); (3) the proclamation of laws (Deut 27:15–26; 28:16–19). It is interesting that all these curse-sayings are a reflex of one violating his relationship to God. To illustrate from Deut 27:15–26, idolatry (v. 15), disrespect for parents (v. 16), deceiving one’s neighbor (vv. 17, 24), manipulating the disadvantaged (vv. 18–19), sexual aberrations (vv. 20, 21, 22, 23), bribery (v. 25), and not observing God’s law (v. 26) all bring the condemnation of the curse.” Hamilton, “arar,” 75.

278 Ibid., 411.

279 John Bergsma and Scott Hahn point out, “Usually Noah’s disrobing is thought to be merely the result of his drunkenness, yet individuals typically do not disrobe simply because they are drunk. Noah’s ‘uncovering himself’ in the tent certainly carries erotic overtones.” John S. Bergsman and Scott Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan (Genesis 9:20–27)” Journal of Biblical Literature 124/1 (2005): 30.
Scripture does not indicate how Noah became exposed; yet, it does state that he was naked, and Ham saw him and informed his brothers. It appears that by seeing and acknowledging what he saw, Ham in some manner was trying to shame his father’s authority. Therefore, the narrator possibly wanted to expose Ham’s intention to shame his father. Sailhamer confirms the idea as he states, “In covering their father’s nakedness, Shem and Japheth were like Adam and Eve and God who did not look on man’s nakedness but covered it with coats of skin. Ham, on the other hand, did not follow that lead. His actions were more like those of whom God warned later in the Torah who ‘expose their own nakedness’ before God and man.” Ham seemingly wanted his father’s nakedness to be displayed. Ham seized a moment, and took it upon himself to shame his father, because he lusted for control over his father.

Textual Turning Point

It seems as though Gen 9:18–25 is some type of textual turning point. In fact, Frederick Bassett contends that there is a textual addition or correction contained within this passage to

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280 Sailhamer, Genesis, 96. Sailhamer notes, “Since some scholars have interpreted Exodus 20:24–26 as a prohibition of Canaanite forms of worship (Brevard Childs), there may be an intended link between Ham and the Canaanites in the notion of ‘nakedness.’ So important was this matter to the author of the Torah that he included among the rules for the priest that they should wear ‘linen undergarments’ as a covering for their ‘naked flesh’ when they go near the presence of God at the altar (Exod 28:42–43). The sons of Noah are here shown to belong to two groups of mankind, those who like Adam and Eve hide the shame of their nakedness, and those who like Ham, or rather the Canaanites, have not sense of their shame before God. To the one group, the line of Shem, there will be blessing; but to the other, the Canaanites, there can only be curse.” Ibid.

281 Sailhamer, Genesis, 96.

282 Wenham assists with the issue at hand as he remarks, “Throughout the ancient world, and even today in traditional societies, honoring parents is a most sacred duty.” Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 199. Wenham observes that “the Old Testament nowhere states how sons should handle situations where parents are disgracing themselves. But no doubt Israelites would have agreed with the Ugaritic Aqht epic which states that a son should take his father ‘by the hand when he is drunk, carries him when he is sated with wine.’ In other words, he must try tactfully to cover up his father’s folly.” Ibid., 199–200. There are some that see the act that took place between Ham and Noah as an actual homosexual rape. See, Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice, 66–71.
emphasize that point. The turning point comes because the text specifically asserts the birth of the Canaanites. Thus, the Canaanites are introduced as a people born under the curse of Ham. Furthermore, in the biblical texts, the Canaanites became an unruly people who lusted after things that were not a part of God’s ideal plan for man. Atkinson states that “according to many parts of the Old Testament, the Canaanites are one of the greatest sources of temptation to the people of God. The sexual perversions of the Canaanites, often associated with their religious drunken orgies, were held up to the people of God as behaviors to avoid.”\textsuperscript{283} Ham lusted over his father for control. His nakedness afforded him with the opportunity.

\textbf{Genesis 9:18–25 in the Wake of Research}

When Noah heard that Ham had seen him naked, he cursed Ham’s son, Canaan.\textsuperscript{284} Ross notes, “Nakedness in the Old Testament was from the beginning a thing of shame for fallen humankind.”\textsuperscript{285} Ham, Noah’s son, witnessed his father in a state of vulnerability, and did nothing to reverse it. Instead, Ham appears to revel in it. Therefore, one has to wonder if there is more to

\textsuperscript{283} Atkinson, \textit{The Message of Genesis 1–11}, 169.

\textsuperscript{284} An interesting view of this passage is presented by Frederick Bassett; he states, “In the laws prohibiting certain sexual relations in Lev 18 and 20, this expression clearly has an idiomatic force, meaning to have sexual intercourse. Although the idiom typically used in these laws is ‘to uncover the nakedness of someone’ (\textit{galah ‘erwat}), both idioms are used in parallelism in Le. 20:17. This verse reads, ‘And if a man takes his sister, either his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter, and see (\textit{ra’ah}) her nakedness, it is a shameful thing, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children or their people; he has uncovered (\textit{gillah}) his sister’s nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.’” Bassett, “Noah’s Nakedness and the Curse of Canaan: A Case of Incest?,” 233.

\textsuperscript{285} Ross, \textit{Creation and Blessing}, 215 Ross explains as he comments, “To Adam and Eve as sinners, the state of nakedness was both undignified and vulnerable. Their covering of their nakedness was a sound instinct, for it provided a boundary for fallen human relations.” Ross expounds as he states, “To be exposed meant to be unprotected; to see someone uncovered was to bring dishonor and to gain advantage for potential exploitation. A similar commentary on seeing nakedness as a gross violation of honor is related by Herodotus in the story of Gyges, who, when seeing the nakedness of Candaules’ wife—which Herodotus said was a shame among the Lydians—either had to kill Candaules or had to be killed himself (\textit{Herodotus} 1.8–13).” Ibid.
the story. Waltke contends that Ham’s voyeurism is not just a casual glance, but it is a
surveying.\textsuperscript{286} He states, “Voyeurism in general violates another’s dignity and robs that one of his
or her instinctive desire for privacy and for propriety. It is a form of domination. Ham’s,
however, is perverse, for his is homosexual voyeurism.”\textsuperscript{287} Leupold remarks about the word that
is used (\textit{wayyar}) Ham did not “harmlessly and accidentally” see his father’s nakedness, but “he
looked at” or he gazed with satisfaction.\textsuperscript{288} Sarna sums up the issue as he notes that “we are not
certain if Ham is guilty solely of voyeurism or if the description of his offense in verse 22 is a
euphemism for some act of gross indecency.”\textsuperscript{289} The narrator did not feel that it was necessary to
completely divulge what happened. Rather, the narrator conveyed that there had been a
breakdown in the familial structure, and a deviation from the one flesh union between man and
woman because of lust.

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\textsuperscript{286} Waltke comments, “The Hebrew \textit{ra’a} here means ‘to look at (searchingly),’ not a harmless or accidental
seeing.” Waltke, \textit{Genesis: A Commentary}, 149. Mathews states, “‘Saw’ (\textit{ra’a}) is the common term for observing and
does not convey necessarily the idea of sexual lust; the term can be used in this way (6:2; 34:2), but such meaning
must be derived from the context and not the term by itself.” Mathews, \textit{Genesis 1–11:26}, 419.

\textsuperscript{287} Waltke, \textit{Genesis: A Commentary}, 149. Waltke continues by noting: “Worse yet, he dishonors his father,
whom he should have revered in any case (Ex 21:15–17; Deut 21:18–21; Mark 7:10). And then increases the
dishonor by proclaiming it to others. Ham’s brothers thought it sin merely to look at their father’s nakedness and
took every effort not to do so.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{288} Leupold, \textit{Exposition of Genesis}, 346.

\textsuperscript{289} Sarna, \textit{Genesis}, 64. Cassuto states, “He told his brothers what he had seen within the tent, and the
narration itself was a disgraceful thing, since he committed an offence not only against his father’s honor by making
him an object of derision, but also against the dictates of chastity.” Umberto Cassuto, \textit{A Commentary on the Book of
Genesis 19:1–11 – Sodom and Gomorrah

Gen 19:1–11 is a thought-provoking story about Lot and the city of Sodom. On a particular night, two angels entered the city of Sodom. Upon seeing them, Lot took them to his house. Once the men of Sodom learned of the two men, they went to Lot’s house. As the men of Sodom arrived at Lot’s house, they demanded that Lot bring the two men out so that they could have sex with them. Lot refused, and offered his two daughters in place of the two strangers.

Key Word

יָדָה

The word for this study is יד ("to know"). The word יד ("to know") is found 948 times in the Old Testament (822x as a Qal); its usages cause the various “meanings to become difficult in relating to one another. Meanings range from sensory perception to intellectual process to practical skill to careful attention to close relationship to physical intimacy.”

But, the word יד is used sixteen times in the Old Testament to refer to a sexual encounter. Adam “knew” Eve his wife,

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291 W. Schottroff notes, “Yd’ indicates the knowledge that results from realization, experience, and perception and that one can learn [from this knowledge] and transmit [this knowledge] (qal ‘to know’).” W. Schottroff, “יד,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 512. Waltke expounds on this notion as he observes, “In the Bible, ‘knowing’ someone involves a personal intimate involvement, not an impersonal knowing of information. Here ‘knowing’ is used of the most intimate, hallowed relationship between a husband and wife.” Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 96. Wenham points out that יד “priarily covers knowledge acquired through the senses, experience that can be passed on to others, and practical knowledge.” Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 100–101. William Cole remarks, “The Old Testament uses the verb ‘to know’ (yada’) frequently to indicate sexual relations. This usage was by no means confined to marital coitus, though it is clear that such ‘knowledge’ belonged ideally in marriage.” William Graham Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1959), 276. Sarna observes that “the Hebrew stem y-d-’ can encompass a range of meanings that includes involvement, interaction, loyalty, and obligation. It can be used of the most intimate and most hallowed relationships between man and wife and between man and God, but never is the verb employed for animal copulation.” Sarna, *Genesis*, 31. Otto Piper claims that יד enhanced the sexual encounter within marriage in three points: “(1) it is strictly personal knowledge, (2) its subject matter consists in the mutual relationship between two
and she conceived (4:1); Cain “knew” his wife, and she conceived (Gen 4:17); Adam “knew” his wife again, and she bore a son (Gen 4:25); the men of Sodom wanted Lot to bring out the strangers so that they might “know” them (Gen 19:5); Lot offered his daughters to the men of Sodom so that they might “know” them (Gen 19:9). The word עָדָּה (knowing) is set apart for human beings, for it is never used in the Bible when discussing the act of procreation of animals; instead the instinctual appetite is appeased through mere sexual intercourse.292 But, עָדָּה can also be used in reference to perverted sexual activity (i.e., Gen 19:5, 8; Judg 19:22, 25) outside of the grounds of marriage.293

Key Phrase

The key phrase for Gen 19:1–11 is “that we may know them” (דבר אודגפ). The key to understanding rests in the intent of the men of Sodom.294 Did the men of Sodom want to merely parties, (3) it is a knowledge of an inner secret.” Otto Piper, The Christian Interpretation of Sex (New York: Scribner’s, 1941), 8–10.

292 Waltke, Genesis: A Commentary, 96. Keil and Delitzsch assert, “Generation in man is an act of personal free-will, not a blind impulse of nature, and rests upon a moral self-determination. It flows from the divine institution of marriage, and is therefore knowing (עָדָּה) the wife.” Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 108. Hamilton comments, “It is not without significance that often the sexual relationship described in the Bible is one in which the partners fully know each other. One partner does not exploit the other. Rather than being an end in itself, cohabitation is a means to an end, and that end is deeper, more intimate knowledge of each other. In other words, expressing oneself sexually is not just a glandular function.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17, 220. Hamilton will later note about the verb ידָּה stating, “This deeper level of knowledge cannot be captured by an English verb.” Ibid., 220.

293 J. A. Thompson comments, “The verb know (yada’) carries a deeper significance than that of intellectual knowledge. There is something of personal commitment at the emotional and volitional level as well.” J. A. Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 299. J. A. Thompson states, “The verb yada’, ‘know’ denotes much more than intellectual knowledge but rather that deep intimate knowledge that follows on the personal commitment of one life to another, which is at its deepest in the commitment of a man to God.” Ibid., 310.

investigate the strangers in their town? Or, did they have more ruthless thoughts in mind to do to these strangers? Hamilton answers: “Their words, ‘We will deal worse with you than with them’ suggest that they are prepared to have coitus with Lot. They will take Lot himself as a substitute sex partner rather than his daughters.”

Why did the men of Sodom want “to know” the strangers? When the two strangers arrived, Lot was sitting at the gate and met them. Immediately, he invited them to stay at his home. Yet, they wanted to stay in the square. But, Lot insisted so they followed him to his house. After they had eaten, men of Sodom surrounded the house demanding that Lot bring the visitors out so that the men of Sodom might “know them.” Having heard their requests, Lot departed his home and pleaded with the men not to be “wicked” (יהוה). To put the situation at ease, Lot decided to offer his virgin daughters to the men of Sodom. This act did not help the situation, and

295 Morschauser contends, “In Biblical Hebrew, the verb ידוע (‘to know’) is a crux within Genesis 19. It has a number of meanings, ranging from simple ‘comprehension’ to the ‘gaining of experience,’ with its employment as a euphemism for ‘intimate physical relations’ often cited in this connection. This is clearly the case in Gen 19:8, in the designation of Lot’s daughters that they ‘have not known a man,’ that is, they are sexually inexperienced. I propose, however, that because of its literary proximity, the latter nuance has unduly influenced the interpretative history of ידוע in Gen 19:5. While there is undoubtedly a play on the word ‘know’ within these verses, it is completely unnecessary to take the Sodomites’ oration as a demand for ‘sexual intercourse.’” ידוע also has a juridical implication to it. It is typical of treaty/covenantal terminology in the Near East, referring to ‘formal acknowledgement/recognition’ of an individual’s identity or status. Within this semantic sphere is the forensic usage of the word to denote the process of ‘legal discovery, or inquiry,’ where ידוע has the meaning ‘to investigate (a person’s state or action)’ (so as to make a decision).” Ibid., 471–472. Later Morschauser remarks, “The councils’ demand that the guest be produced for examination draws the reasonable objection that Lot has already guaranteed that the lodgers are no threat: no further legal action is required or necessary at this point. Yet, to reassure his fellow officials that he understands the depth of their concern, Lot makes a counter-proposal of ‘Solomonic’ proportions. He will formally offer his daughters as hostages of the government, to be held in safe custody until the morrow, when those under his charge are sent of their journey, supposedly far from Sodom.” Ibid., 483.

296 C. W. Landis argues, “If all they wanted to do was investigate the two men, why would Lot plead with the Sodomites, ‘Do not act wickedly (verse 7)?’ The interpretation of this ‘wickedness’ as a breach of hospitality is inadequate. It is also illogical that Lot would offer his two daughters to the mob in an attempt to appease them, if all they had in mind was an investigation. His stress on his daughter’s virginity would be meaningless unless the overall context was dealing with sex.” Clarence William Landis, “Homosexuality From a Biblical Perspective” Trinity Journal 6/1 (1977): 45.

the anger intensifies toward Lot. Christopher Heard observes that “the crowd’s anger flares in response to Lot’s offer of his daughters in place of his houseguests, though the daughters would provide exactly the opportunity to inflict harm on Lot’s household instead of on Lot himself.” However, it does not soothe the situation. In fact, the men of Sodom acknowledge Lot as a threat/usurper. Gen 19:9b states, “Then they said, ‘This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge.’” Holly Toensing points out that “Genesis 19:9 seems to suggest that Lot never attains such status with his marriage, for the men of the city say, ‘This fellow came here as an alien, and he acts as a judge continually!’ Once an outsider, always an outsider? Lot, nor his ideas were acceptable. The manner in which Lot responds to his fellow townspeople appears to indicate in what manner they wanted to “know” the strangers. They wanted to “know” the strangers sexually.


299 Holly Joan Toensing, “Women of Sodom and Gomorrah: Collateral Damage in the War Against Homosexuality?” Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 21/2 (2005): 66. Later Toensing notes that “the angels are messengers from the Lord and the males of Sodom and Gomorrah wish to attack, to show their power over what belongs to the Lord—these angels. To humiliate agents of God would be to show the superiority of foreign gods over the God of Abram. In this way the action of Sodom and Gomorrah’s men may have been characteristic of the widespread arrogance and idolatry among men and women throughout the cities on the plain.” Ibid., 70.

300 Bratsiotis remarks, “God himself is responsible for establishing marriage. Before God and in the presence of the woman, the man acknowledges (this is the sense of אָמַר → יָמַר ‘amar, ‘to say,’ and → קָרַה qara’, ‘to call,’ in Gen 2:23) the equality of the partnership between ‘is and ‘issa which God had established, and before God he makes a covenant with the woman (cf. 2:22b: 3:12, and the use of יש נתן ה, ‘to give’), which, consequently, is a ‘covenant of God’ (it is explicitly called בֵּרִית ’էלוהים in Prov 2:17). In a type of ‘marriage formula,’ he acknowledges the woman as ‘his wife,’ i.e., ‘issa (cf. Gen 2:24; cf. also Ezk 16:8b), which ‘indicates that monogamy is the foundation of the whole human race.’ Consequently, he sets here beside him in her proper place, which God had appointed for her (cf. Gen 2:18). Thus, she is now for him ‘esheth chego, ‘the wife of his bosom’ (Deut 28:54; cf. 13:7), just as he is for her ‘is cheqah, ‘the husband of her bosom’ (28:56). That which his spoken before God in Gen 2:24 clearly has to do with sexual intercourse, which is also connected with the blessing of God in 1:28 (cf. 4:1), and is regarded as one of the purposes of marriage (cf. 2:24; also 2:18, 20b). Thus, the creature (child) produced as a result of this act combines within himself once again ‘is and ‘issa. Here one may seek a theological reason for the prohibition of the homosexual relationship (Lev 20:13; cf. 18:22), which is considered to be an ‘abomination’ (וְאָפְחַת) and a transgression worthy of death, since it perverts sexual differentiation and marriage, which is based on this.” Bratsiotis, יָמַר, 227–228.
The incident of Gen 19:1–11 states that strangers came to town. John Boswell, and Derrick Baily suggest that Lot usurped his place within the city of Sodom, and welcomed the two guests without the city’s approval.\(^{301}\) Thus, the men of Sodom came to Lot’s house so that they could “know” the strangers – an innocent, viable request. However, there seems to be a textual issue with this proposal.\(^{302}\) Sarna remarks that the men of Sodom were not concerned with hospitality, but wanted to “commit homosexual rape upon” the visitors.\(^{303}\) One comes to this conclusion, because Lot was willing to offer his daughters to the men of Sodom to appease their “wickedness.”\(^{304}\) Yet, that did not satisfy them, but made them more persistent and angrier. Mathews asserts, “They make no pretense about their business; they openly make known their


\(^{302}\) Richard Davidson asserts, “As plausible as these hypothesis may sound, the traditional understanding of this passage seems to fit best the immediate context. It is important to recognize that in the Genesis narrative, initial reference to the wickedness of Sodom (13:13) utilizes the term ‘men [’anse] of Sodom,’ (RSV) not the more generic term ‘people’ (‘am) used elsewhere in Genesis for a reference to the general inhabitants of a city. In 19:4, the same term, ‘anse, ’men of [a place],’ is repeated twice in one verse, again to underscore that these are the males who surround Lot’s house. The immediate context also indicates that the wickedness of Sodom goes far beyond (although it does not eliminate) issues of hospitality. The narrator first describes the condition of Sodom’s men as ‘wicked, great sinners against the Lord (13:13), and then the same message is recorded from the mouth of God: ‘How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin!’ (18:20). Such language could hardly describe merely a spirit of inhospitality.” Richard M. Davidson, Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 146.

\(^{303}\) Sarna, Genesis, 135. He further states, “From such text as Leviticus 18:22, 24 and 20:13, 23 it is clear that homosexuality is regarded as one of the abhorrent perversions of the Canaanites.” Ibid.

\(^{304}\) Mathews points out “that Lot sanctions the rape of his daughters indicates a moral compass gone awry; he places hospitality above the protection of his own children. It is difficult to conceive of such a custom that would put a guest’s well-being over family. Such treatment by a father was despicable in the eyes of Israel; forcing a daughter into prostitution is specifically forbidden in Mosaic law (Lev 19:29).” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 236–237.
intentions to assault the visitors sexually.”

Thus, hospitality does not appear to be part of the equation. 306 Waltke stresses, “The men of the city cry not just for homosexuality but for rape.”

As a consequence, Gen 13:13 (cf. 18:20) contends that the city of Sodom was wicked. 308 The men of Sodom lusted after the two strangers so that they could know them sexually. 309 Their intense lust for the men, coupled with their hatred for Lot, propelled them toward committing a heinous crime. 310

305 Ibid., 235.

306 Hamilton argues that “the sin of the Sodomites is a violation of the rules of hospitality.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50, 34. Hamilton asserts that “when Lot responds by offering his daughters ‘who have never known a man,’ it becomes clear that the issue is intercourse and not friendship.” Ibid.

307 Waltke, Genesis, 276.

308 Robert Gagnon points out that Sodom’s wickedness went beyond homosexuality. He states, “Isaiah likens the devastation of the country around Zion to that of Sodom... not given justice to the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow (Is 1:7–17). Ezekiel states that ‘the sin’ of Sodom consisted of the fact that ‘she and her daughters had pride (Ezk 16:49–50).’ Robert A. Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 79–80. However, he later notes, “Jude 7 characterizes Sodom as a city ‘that committed sexual immorality and went after other flesh.’” Ibid., 87. Davidson observes that “the narrator of the book of Judges consciously modeled his telling of the story of the disgrace at Gibeah (Judges 19) after the account in Genesis 19, and since the Judges 19 story clearly has reference to homosexual activity, one should interpret the story of Genesis 19 the same way.” Davidson, Flame of Yahweh, 147.

309 Mathews notes, “The merism ‘both young and son,’ that is, everybody, shows that their homosexual practices had become generational... Alternatively, the Hebrew term qaseh, which means ‘end, extremity,’ can refer to the population directly, that is, ‘to the last man.’” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 235.

310 Waltke shares the horribleness of the situation as he states, “These men have degraded the intimacy of marriage to the lowest level of sexual intercourse; they know nothing of true intimate commitment. They rape the mind, emotions, and body, trivialize the sacred, and legitimatize the vulgar.” Waltke, Genesis, 276. Kidner notes that the “early point in Scripture the sin of sodomy is branded as particularly heinous. The law was to make it a capital offence, grouped with incest and bestiality (Lev 18:22; 20:13).” Kidner, Genesis, 134. Westermann shares the problem as he states, “Crime is common throughout the world; throughout the world it disrupts human society. Here the crime is unnatural lust together with a particularly repulsive violation of a guest’s right to protection.” Westermann, Genesis, 143.
Gen 38:11–30 is a narrative about Judah after the death his wife and two of his sons. Judah’s third son remained alive, and he had been promised to Tamar. She was originally Judah’s eldest son’s wife. Once Er died, Judah made his second son take Tamar as his wife. But, he died. Judah then promised Tamar that once his youngest son became of age to marry that he would fulfill his obligation to her. But, for whatever reason, Judah neglected his promise. Instead, the account states that he went up to Timnah to shear sheep. Once Tamar found out, she disguised herself as a temple prostitute and enticed Judah.

After a period of time, Judah learned that Tamar was expectant. Judah became outraged, and decided to have Tamar killed. However, Tamar exposed Judah as the father. Judah’s lust was what caused him to be exposed as a fraud.

**Key Words**

The first word of this study is הָוָּמֵת. It can be found fifty-five times in the Old Testament. The word הָוָּמֵת, in every case, means “widow.” The first time it can be found in the Bible is Gen 38:11. Judah’s daughter-in-law was classified as a הָוָָּמֵת after the death of his sons. God hears the pleas of a widow (Ex 22:23); a widow could not marry a priest (Lev 21:14); if a priest’s daughter finds herself as a widow, she can return home (Lev 22:13); the vow of a widow shall stand against her (Num 30:10); Elijah aided the widow by reviving her dead son (1 Kgs 17:20); the Lord will establish the boundary of the widow (Prov 15:25); God is a defender of the widow (Ps 68:5).
“Widows” are viewed biblically as a special case. Cornelis van Leeuwen explains this special case as he remarks, “The Old Testament word ‘widow’ not only evokes the notion of bereavement from having lost a husband (2 Sam 14:5), but at the same time the loss of economic and social protection and security.” Expounding on this thought, J. Kuhlewein notes that a widow is a “sorrowful” sight. Hoffner contends, “In Biblical Hebrew, the word ‘almanah has a completely negative nuance.” In Deut 14:29, people were blessed for having taken care of widows of their community. However, when the land was full of widows it was understood as God’s displeasure toward the society. Gen 38:11–30 helps bring to light the significance of all of the abovementioned quotes. Tamar became a widow twice, so she had lost her security twice – a sorrowful sight. But Judah had one more son for her. However, he ignored his responsibility and choose not to give him to her. Therefore, she deceives Judah into having a sexual encounter

311 Jack Scott states, “The several contexts in which we see the term used in Scripture will help us to see its significance in God’s Word. First, we note God’s care and concern for widows. God hears their cry (Ex 22:21 –22) and he executes justice on their behalf (Deut 10:18). Therefore, God deals with them out of exceptional pity, as defenseless.” Jack Scott, “almanah,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 47.

312 Cornelis van Leeuwen, “almanah,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 413. Van Leeuwen comments, “As long as the Israelites lived as semi-nomads in their tribes and clans and the family ties were still strong, the lot of the widow was not yet a problem. She returned to her parental home, where she shared in the protection and care of the clan and kept the possibility of a levirate marriage (Gen 38:11; Deut 25:5–10; Ruth 1:8–11). Later on when, after the settlement in Canaan, the tribalism gave way to the life in cities and villages, the widows became victims of the development of growing social contrasts. So they are often mentioned together with other poor and miserable people of Israelite society, like orphans, aliens, or Levites (Job 29:13; 31:16; Jer 22:3; Zech 7:10), or in parallelism with divorced women (Lev 21:14; 22:13; Num 30:9; Ezek 44:22).” Ibid.


315 Scott comments, “The existence of widows was not indicative of good times and the presence of many widows in the land indicated God’s displeasure with the people and punishment of them (Ex 22:24; Jer 15:8). On two occasions, cities under God’s judgment are called widows (Is 47:8; Lam 1:1).” Scott, “almanah,” 47.
with her. Once Judah learned that she was pregnant, he demanded that she be put to death. Judah was not pleased with his father so he took his son from him; on the other hand, God took two of his sons from him because of his displeasure.

The second word of this investigation is ḥēz. The word (ḥēz), means “commit fornication,” “be a harlot,” or “play the harlot.” The basic meaning of ḥēz is to conduct a sexual act that was not appropriate. S. Erlandsson advises, “The verb zanah designates primarily a sexual relationship outside of a formal union.” To make this definition more concise, Gary Hall contends that “znh is a broad term for sexual misconduct, including adultery, and may at times be synonymous with adultery. znh has two related but distinct meanings: to fornicate or have illicit sex, and to practice prostitution, i.e., offer sex for hire.” Thus, the idea behind the word was that one acted in a manner that was “unfaithful, profane, or treacherous.” As a consequence, the person made himself “unclean.”


317 S. Erlandsson, “Ḥēz,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 100. Erlandsson notes, “Because the woman is subordinate to the man, she is always the subject of zanah. The participle zonah or ‘issah zonah designates a woman who has sexual intercourse with someone with whom she does not have a formal covenant relationship. Any sexual relationship of a woman outside the marriage bond or without a formal union is termed fornication. When there is already a formal union and the sexual association is formed outside this union, zanah become synonymous with ni’eph, ‘commit adultery.’” Ibid.

318 Gary H. Hall, “Ḥēz,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1123. Hall asserts, “In the Old Testament, fornication describes illicit sex by a female that violates a relationship with a male, either a husband or father, for which the penalty is death (Gen 38:24; Lev 21:9; Deut 22:21; Hos 2:3).” Ibid.

Tamar was accused of having committed adultery (Gen 38:24). According to Deut 22:13, if a betrothed woman that had sex outside of marriage she was to be killed. Erlandsson states the reason as he writes: “All sexual intercourse is to be set within a formal relationship.” Tamar appeared to be culpable, so she needed to be executed.

The third word is הַדְּקָר. It can be found only three times, in the feminine case, in the Old Testament. The word הַדְּקָר, in every case, means “temple prostitute.” Tamar was seen as a temple prostitute (Gen 38:21f.); God states that there was to be no temple prostitution (Deut 28:17); God warned that He would not bless temple prostitution (Hos 4:14). Temple prostitution was a part of the Ancient Near Eastern society, but to what extent is unclear.

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320 Erlandsson insists, “No one born in adultery may belong to the assembly of Yahweh (Deut 23:3).” Erlandsson, “ְיָֽהוּ,” 100.

321 Erlandsson, “ְיָֽהוּ,” 101. Erlandsson explains as he maintains, “If this view is applied to the relationship between Israel and Yahweh, it follows that all worship of God must take place within the formal relationship of the covenant, in accordance with the covenant precepts of Yahweh. As God’s own elect people, Israel could not worship any god other than Yahweh. Israel was to obey Yahweh’s voice and keep his commandments (Ex 19:5; Deut 13:50.” Ibid.

322 Thomas E. McComiskey states, “The adjective qadesh, like the name Kadesh, means ‘holy,’ but holy to what? The female functionaries in the pagan shrines were called q’desha, temple prostitutes, because that is what they were.” Thomas E. McComiskey, “ְקָדֶֽשַׁת,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 788.

323 Jackie Naude explains the possibility as he notes, “By engaging in sexual intercourse with devotees of the shrine they believed this would encourage the gods and goddesses to do likewise, with the result that a person’s desire for increase in herds and fields, as well as in his own family, could be realized.” Jackie A. Naude, “ְפֶֽרֶשַׁת,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 886.
Key Phrase

The key phrase for Gen 38:11–30 is “what will you give me” (יְלַיְלֹהוֹ). This phrase is key for this passage because it incorporates an idea of commitment. The word play seems to come from the notion of a wedding contract. It appears to originate from some type terminology of contractual law (Gen 16:3; 29:28; 30:4, 9; 34:8, 12; 38:14; 41:45; Deut 22:16; Josh 15:16f.; Judg 1:12f.; 21:1; 1 Sam 18:17, 19, 27; 1 Kgs 2:17, 21; 2 Kgs 14:9; 1 Chron 2:35; 2 Chron 25:18). However, the text shows that Judah had not kept his commitment to Tamar. Judah did not have any intentions to keep his contract. But, Tamar made a contractual agreement with Judah, and she was persistent to keep her part of the bargain. Mathews notes why this phrase is key as he comments, “Tamar plays out her role by asking for the appropriate payment, ‘What will you give me?’ This may be a play on the failures of Onan and Judah, the former who did not ‘give his semen’ and the latter’s son to whom ‘she had not been given.’” The manner that the narrator used the term “what will you give me” (יְלַיְלֹהוֹ) suggests that Judah was controlled by his lust.


325 Michael Grisanti remarks, “The near juxtaposition of הֲיִשָּׂא (for a wife) with ntn refers to the involvement of the bride’s parents or others in the marriage arrangement (Gen 16:3; 29:28; 30:4, 9; 34:8, 12, et al.), just as the verb lqh signifies the activity of the groom or his parents (Gen 12:19; 25:20; 28:9; 34:4, 21; et al.). In the mouth of the groom or his parents, the imperatival form of ntn becomes a stereotypical speech form for the acquisition of a bride (Gen 34:8, 12; 2 Kgs 14:9 = 2 Chron 25:18). ntn also signifies the act of giving a dowry (2 Kgs 9:16) or a wedding present to a daughter (Josh 15:19).” Michael Grisanti, “ַלֹּהוֹ,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 206–207.

Genesis 38:11–30 in the Wake of Research

The life of a widow in the Ancient Near East was difficult. In order to survive, she had to depend upon her sons. However, if she did not have any sons, she then had to depend upon the nearest kinsman of her deceased husband (Deut 25:5–10). Therefore, Tamar took the situation into her own hands. Since Judah had not acted upon his commitment to her, she decided to lure Judah into a trap. Tamar appears to have used Judah’s lust to lure him into her ruse. Sure enough, when Judah saw her, he propositioned her to have sex with him. Yet, sex for itself was not Tamar’s purpose. Mathews notes this as he states, “Tamar herself sets about to remedy her situation because of two reasons. First, ‘after a long time’ shows that Judah will not yield Shelah, In most Ancient Near East societies, a deceased husband could leave his possessions to his widow. However, this was not the case in Israel. Eryl Davies notes, “In Israel there were no provision enabling the widow to inherit the property of her deceased husband. If the widow had children of her own, her husband’s estates would have passed to them, and if she had no children then the nearest kinsman of the husband would have succeeded to the estate (Num 27:8–11). It is clear, therefore, that the plight of the childless widow in Israel must have been particularly distressing, since she would have lost all claim to her husband’s property. The law did, however, make one provision which might allow her to benefit from the estate of her deceased husband. This was the custom known as levirate marriage which stated that, if a man died without leaving any children, the brothers of the deceased had the responsibility of providing the widow with male heirs (Deut 25:5–10).” Eryl W. Davies, “Inheritance Rights and the Hebrew Levirate Marriage” Vetus Testamentum 31/2 (1981): 138–139.

Keil and Delitzsch note that Judah “blamed her for the early and sudden deaths of his elder sons, whereas the real cause of the deaths which had so grieved his paternal heart was the wickedness of the sons themselves, the mainspring of which was to be found in his own marriage with a Canaanite in violation of the patriarchal call.” Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 342–343.

Hamilton observes, “Tamar bides her time until Judah’s wife is dead. For one thing she has no interest in ruining and defaming the marriage of her in-laws. For another thing, she knows that Judah is more sexually vulnerable now that he is a widower.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50, 439.

Wenham observes, “Judah takes the bait—his sexual appetite will not tolerate postponement though he has been content to let Tamar languish as a childless widow indefinitely.” Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 367. Waltke notes, “Judah is like a reputable gentleman who unwittingly ‘loses’ his credit card in a brothel. The prostitute running of with his valuable possessions makes him look like a fool for entrusting them to her.” Waltke, Genesis, 513.
although he had become of marriageable age. Second, Judah’s wife has died, leaving Judah more vulnerable to sexual encounter.”

Judah’s lack of care for Tamar continued when he found out that she was with child. He demanded that she be put to death. Hamilton contends, “Judah’s prescribed penalty for Tamar is let her be burned, a form of execution that may well be intended to reflect Tamar’s alleged display of unbridled sexual passion.” Yet, it was Judah that had displayed unbridled sexual passion, and this passion produced a child.

**Genesis 39:7–20 – Joseph Protects the Integrity of His Master**

Gen 39:7–20 provides an account of what happened to Joseph after his brothers sold him into captivity. Potiphar, an Egyptian officer, bought him. During his time as Potiphar’s servant, Potiphar’s wife attempted to seduce him. However, her attempts failed. Yet, she obtained Joseph’s coat and accused him of attempting to rape her. Even though Joseph was innocent, Potiphar imprisoned him. Apparently, for whatever reason, Potiphar’s wife attempted to use sex for dishonorable reasons.


333 Westermann contends, “At the very last moment, condemned to be burnt to death and about to be led out of the city to be executed, she sends Judah the insignia that proved that he is the father of the child. He himself must now bear witness to her innocence.” Westermann, *Genesis*, 270. Waltke sums up the narrative well as he observes, “Tamar is a heroine in Israel because she risks her life for family fidelity.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 513–514.
Key Word

This study is to survey the word אב. Within these usages, אב is most often used to express the idea of: “enter,” “go,” “come,” “arrive,” or “bring.” One nuance of how the word is used is a man bringing his daughter to the man. In this text, Potipher’s wife accused Potipher of having “brought” Joseph to her house, so that Joseph could “go in” to be with her (Gen 39:14 = 2x).

Key Phrase

The key phrase for Gen 39:7–20 is “lie with me” (קטbower עשתו). This phrase is used four times in these verses (vv. 7, 10, 12, and 14). Robert Alter contends that “the verbatim repletion of the phrase becomes crucial to the story . . . as though these words were all she ever spoke to Joseph, day after day, until finally the plain meaning of the words is translated into the physical act of grabbing the man.” But Joseph shows himself to be a trustworthy servant. However, Potiphar’s wife has cunning intentions – to show her husband as a wicked individual; for he brought Joseph in for one purpose – “to lie with her.” Alter comments, “This lady who before had exhibited a speech-repertoire of two carnal words here shows herself a subtle mistress of syntactic equivocation. In her words to the servants, the husband had unambiguously brought the

334 Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 137. Alter remarks, “By contrast, Joseph’s refusal is a voluble outpouring of language, full of repetitions that are both dramatically appropriate—as a loyal servant, he is emphatically protesting the moral scandal of the deed proposed—and thematically pointed. The key word ‘all’ is picked up from the fame and used to stress the comprehensiveness of the responsibility that has been entrusted to Joseph. Ibid., 136–137.
Hebrew ‘to play with us.’”  

Wenham adds to this notion as he states, “‘To fool with us’ is a nicely ambiguous phrase used of sexual intimacy in 26:8 and of insulting behavior in 21:9. ‘To lie with me.’ You may have had to endure his insults, but I have nearly been raped.” Her intention was to rid herself of culpability by refocusing the lust, which had originated in her. She squarely placed it upon their new servant – Joseph.

**Genesis 39:7–20 in the Wake of Research**

The narrative of Joseph presents a case of a man who was able to overcome the lust of a woman. Wenham explains, “Her raw lust and his sense of propriety and loyalty are admirably captured by the dialogue.”  

However, even though Joseph’s situation was not ideal, he was able to live ideally. Mathews notes that Potiphar’s wife contends that Joseph “was out of place.” She did all that she could to rid her house of him, so she claimed that in order to stop his advances she had to scream. As a result, he left, leaving his clothes in her hand as evidence.

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335 Ibid., 138. Atler continues as he notes that the wife projected “a sharp rebuke to the husband, suggesting that he had perversely invited trouble by introducing such a sexual menace into the household, but his wife is cunning enough to word the accusation in such a way that he will be left the choice of taking it as a direct rebuke or as an implicit and mild one.” Ibid., 139.


337 Ibid.

338 The narrator explains how Joseph was able to do this in the narrative. Wenham points this out as he shares that Joseph “gives three reasons that the suggestion must be rejected: it is an abuse of the great trust placed in him; it is an offense against her husband; and it is a great sin against God.” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 375. Mathews notes, “‘My master’ on Joseph’s lips reinforces his sense of duty to the man who has entrusted all to him.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 736.


340 Hamilton notes that “it is interesting to note that the homonymous Hebrew verb *bagad* is sometimes used for marital unfaithfulness (Jer 3:7–8, 20; Mal 2:14).” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50*, 465.
This provided her with what she needed, so she reported the matter to the servants of the house, and then to her husband.

Yet, a strange twist occurs – she holds her husband culpable. Wenham states, “Joseph’s purpose in coming in to her is said to be sexually intimate. But the clause could also be read as subordinate to ‘the one you brought in,’ in which case she is not simply blaming her husband for acquiring a foreign slave but implying that Potiphar had acquired him deliberately to harass his wife.”

Mathews adds more to consider as he states, “The woman was not claiming her offense was Joseph’s ethnic identity foremostly, but rather his station in life. Intermarriage with foreigners was common in Egypt, but acceptance of foreigners required their assimilation into Egyptian culture. . . . ‘To make sport’ indicates derision but also has sexual implications.”

There was only one option for Potipher – have Joseph killed. Interestingly, he was not executed, but was thrown into prison. Yet, the narrator seems to convey that there is more to the story. Joseph was punished because he was accused by an Egyptain; however, he was found blameless because he had been a faithful servant. Sailhamer adds, “Joseph is a striking

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343 Kidner contends, “His reprieve presumably owed much to the respect he had won.” Kidner, *Genesis*, 191.

344 Waltke presents some of this as he states, “Joseph exemplifies a noble character. His refusal, though spontaneous, is well thought out from the world and life view of people of faith.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 521. Brueggemann contends that this “story struggles with the contact of real life with real faith. It makes affirmations about both, convinced that they belong together. This narrative assumes an essential compatibility between experience of Yahweh and experience of life.” Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 319.
example of one who always responds in total trust and obedience to the will of God."345 Joseph did not succumb to lust.

**Unions that Used Lust for Personal Gain**

This section of the chapter examines three unions that depart from the ideal union in that sex was offered or used, as a consequence of lust, for personal gain, protection, or to gain some type of advantage over a situation. The passages to be examined are: Gen 12:10–20; Gen 20:1–18; and Gen 26:6–11. As previously noted, careful exegetical consideration is provided in this section to the proper texts, at the conclusion of this section a comparison to Gen 2:24 is considered.

**Genesis 12:10–20 – Abram, Sarai, and Pharaoh**

Gen 12:10–20 is a narrative that begins with a famine in the land. As a result of the famine, Abram went to Egypt for food. As he was traveling, he realized he could be in a state of vulnerability. Therefore, to remedy the situation and protect himself, he told his wife to claim that she was his sister. By making this claim, it allowed Abram to make use of her – for she was beautiful. Once Pharaoh saw her, he took her into his house, and gave Abram many possessions because of her. Yet, the Lord plagued Pharaoh because Sarai was Abram’s wife. Upon realizing this, Pharaoh questioned Abram about his plot, chastised him, and sent him and his wife from his country.

**Key Word**

The key word is הָוָא. The word הָוָא is the most commonly used word for “woman” and “wife.” The only way that one is able to determine the manner in which הָוָא is used is by its context. Perhaps, there is some type of intent that calls for two ideas of “woman” and “wife” into one synonymous word. Thomas McComiskey presents the case as he contends, “The origin of woman is explained in Gen 2:23, 24. She is depicted as the physical counterpart of man, deserving of his unswerving loyalty.” Hamilton enhances this concept as he states, “The statement in Gen 2:24 that an ‘is to forsake (a very strong verb implying abandonment, e.g., Ps 22:1) his father and mother and cleave to his ‘issa is a radical one. Whatever loyalties an ‘is has to his parents, his ancestors, or his community, all of which are proper and noble, they must never take precedent over an ‘is’s loyalty to his ‘issa.” The man and woman together are to formulate their own community.

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346 Victor Hamilton comments, “The Old Testament’s popular etymology for ‘issa is found in Gen 2:23: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman” (‘issa), for she was taken out of man (‘is).’ Everything prior to ‘issa’s creation was ‘from the earth’ (‘adam, 2:7; trees 2:9; animals, 2:19). In the creation account of ‘issa ‘earth’ is never mentioned. Rather ‘issa comes from ha’adam, who for the first time identifies himself as ‘is. ‘adam does not emerge from ‘adama fully formed. First Yahweh-Elohim must shape him and then animate him. Similarly, ‘issa does not emerge from ha’adam fully formed. Yahweh-Elohim extracts a ‘rib’ and builds it into ‘issa. Through the use of the assonance ‘is/‘issa, the biblical writer may have been drawing attention to ‘both the differentiation of functions and the oneness of man-and-woman...in a new community of exchange, in a reciprocity of needs, in a mutuality of responsible concerns.’” Victor P. Hamilton, “חַלֶּק,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 538.

347 Thomas E. McComiskey, “חַלֶּק,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 59. He notes, “It is in context (vv. 24–25) that the word is first used in the sense of ‘mate’ or ‘wife.’” Ibid. Yet, there is a statement being made, that ‘issa is from ‘is. Wayne Grudem argues, “Adam was created first, then Eve. We may not think of this as very important today, but it was important to biblical readers. . . . According to Scripture itself, then, the fact that Adam was created first and then Eve has implications not just for Adam and Eve themselves, but for the relationships between men and women generally throughout time.” Wayne Grudem, Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood (Wheaton, Crossway, 2002), 25.

In order to gain some insight into the backdrop of הָאָדָם a survey of the person becomes helpful. According to the Bible, there is a noticeable difference between the 'is and 'issa (Gen 2:23, 24); a woman/wife “belongs to the man” (Gen 2:24–25; 3:13, 16, 17); women have children (Judg 13:24; 1 Kgs 3:18; Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4); women nurse (Ex 2:7). However, this is not to imply that 'issa is a lesser creature. McComiskey advises, “The Bible holds woman in the highest regard and sets forth ‘graciousness’ (Prov 11:16) and ‘worth’ (Ruth 3:11) as womanly ideals.” Hamilton enriches the role and place of the woman/wife as he exclaims, “The maxim (Prov 19:14) that ‘houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the Lord’ underscores the point that house and wife (or property and family) form the heart of man’s existence.”

The usage of term הָאָדָם is found throughout the Old Testament, and seems to document that a woman was not to be considered as a possession. An 'issa was a human being, and she

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349 N. P. Bratsiotis observes, “‘issa means ‘wife’ in contrast to ‘is, ‘husband.’ Here belong the following expressions which have to do with the man-woman relationship, mostly with regard to sex: ‘issa, ‘fiancée’ (Deut 22:24) or ‘bride (Gen 29:21); nathan lo le’issa, ‘(she) gave him (her maid) as a wife’ (30:4, 9); legach lo ‘issa, ‘he took to himself a wife’ (4:19; 6:2; cf. Ex 21:10); vattehi lo le’issa, ‘and she became his wife’ (1 Sam 25:43); ‘issa bhe’ulath ba’al, ‘the wife of another man’ (Deut 22:22); ‘issa ‘is, ‘a man’s wife’ (Prov 6:26); ‘issa ne ‘urim, ‘a wife of youth’ (Isa 54:6; Prov 5:18); and ‘issa ‘azubah, ‘a wife forsaken (Isa 54:6).” N. P. Bratsiotis, “הָאָדָם,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 225.


351 McComiskey, “הָאָדָם,” 59


353 McComiskey comments, “The word is frequently used in the sense of ‘wife.’ The good wife is highly honored in the Old Testament. He who finds one finds a source of blessing (Prov 18:22) and honor (Prov 12:4). A fruitful wife is a sign of blessing (Ps 128:3). Her honored position is evident in the fact that she is ‘from the Lord (Prov 19:14). The classic picture of the ideal wife is set forth in Prov 31:10–31. A quarrelsome wife, however, may be a source of contention (Prov 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15).” McComiskey, “הָאָדָם,” 60.
had a role. The function of the “wife” was specific. A woman is beautiful to behold (Gen 12:11; 24:16; 29:17; 1 Sam 25:3; 2 Sam 11:2); she stood equal with a man (Ex 35:29; 36:6; Deut 22:22); a woman conceives (Gen 4:1, 17, 25; Lev 12:2; 2 Sam 11:5); a woman could be violated (2 Sam 13:14). J. Kuhlewein asserts, “To violate a woman is an ‘abomination in Israel,’ which summons the wrath and punishment of God (Judg 19f.; cf. Gen 34). Consequently, a whole series of laws regulate the sexual relationship between man and woman.”

Key Phrase

Gen 12:15 states that “the woman was taken” (ה’איח הָעַי) to the house of Pharaoh. This phrase is key to understanding the narrative. Sarai had not produced an heir for Abram so she became a commodity to him. Steinberg notes, “Abram finds himself in a foreign land where he stands to gain much through the beauty of the woman who is unable to fulfill her primary biological function of providing an heir for the family lineage. We are told how Abram took

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354 Bratsiotis writes: “Taken strictly, neither ‘issa nor ‘is appears in Gen 2 as a proper name. For a while, ‘issa serves only as a designation for the sole female human being, because not until after the Fall does the woman receive a proper name—Eve (Gen 3:20). After establishing that there is a fellow creature for man, the narrator uses ‘adam, ‘Adam,’ as the man’s proper name (so in 2:25, ha’adam ve’ishto, ‘Adam and his wife,’ cf. 3:8, 12; on this cf. 16:3, ‘abraham’issa, ‘Abram her husband’). Because of the appearance of the woman, he is no longer the only ‘adam, but he is still the only male and husband and bears the proper name ‘adam, i.e., he is ‘is, ‘the man,’ with reference to the female fellow creature and wife. Only after the appearance of the ‘issa did he function as an ‘is. Thus, both the creation of man in 2:7 and his differentiation into two sexes in 2:21f. are traced back to God. Consequently, God determines not only the position of man in creation in general and his relationship to God and to other created beings (2:7; cf. 2:19f.), but also the equivalent position of man and woman and their close relationship to each other (2:21ff.), which is an I-Thou relationship. Therefore, this sexual differentiation also has a distinct social character about it (cf. 2:18, where ‘ezar, ‘helper,’ is contrasted with lebhadh, ‘alone,’ cf. also 2:20b), which is apparent in the use of → הָיָדַעְתָּהוּ, ‘to know,’ to denote the sexual relationship. . . . God brought the ‘issa to the man as a father gives away his daughter to her husband (→ וּס הבו’ is also used elsewhere of bringing a girl to her husband; cf. Judg 12:9), which is apparently intended to indicate that God himself is responsible for establishing marriage.” Bratsiotis, “איח,” 227.

charge of this situation and commanded his wife to call herself his sister.” Hamilton notes, “As a stranger in a foreign land he will be especially vulnerable, and so will his spouse.” There is no evidence that an Egyptian will take Abraham’s wife. Yet, Sarai surfaced as a problem for Abram. At first it was her barrenness (Gen 11:30), but now it was her beauty. It appears that Abram decided to allow Sarai’s beautiful appearance to help him find favor with Pharaoh. He encouraged Sarai to state that she was his sister. As a consequence, Pharaoh took her to his house. Wenham states, “In context of marriage this phrase properly denotes the formal taking of a woman as a wife and is distinguished from the act of marital intercourse (cf. 20:2–4; 34:2; 38:2; Deut 22:13–14). However, it can be used more loosely to describe all aspects of marriage (25:1; 34:9, 16; Lev 21:7, 13; Deut 20:7).” Mathews adds as he notes, “Hebrew laqah, ‘has taken,’ is a play on the idea of marriage, for the word is a common idiom meaning ‘to marry’ (e.g., 11:29).” Abram took Sarai to Egypt where Pharaoh took her into his house. Abram took what God had given him, and made a sham out of it.

356 Steinberg maintains, “In order to appreciate fully the meaning of this narrative, it must be read in context. Abram has a wife, who, so it seems thus far, is incapable of bearing him a child. This is the only detail provided about the marriage of Abram and Sarai up to this point in Genesis. The two would appear to be defined solely on the basis of status: husband and barren wife. The latter status poses a problem for a household concerned to have an heir. A woman who is barren would seem to be of little functional significance to her husband under such circumstances; she has not fulfilled her role in a family and a society interested in progeny.” Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis*, 52–53.


358 Skinner argues that “Hebrew women are fairer than all others.” Skinner, *Genesis*, 248.


Genesis 12:10–20 in the Wake of Research

Gen 12:10–20 is a peculiar passage of Scripture according to the information that it contains. Abram’s journey for nourishment leaves him a needful man and gave him opportunity to jeopardize God’s plan. Sailhamer contends, “In nearly every episode, that follows, the promise of a ‘numerous seed,’ ‘blessing to all peoples on earth,’ or the ‘gift of the land’ is placed in jeopardy by the actions of the characters of the narrative.”

Perhaps Sarai’s barrenness caused Abram to decide to take advantage of her. Waltke notes that by addressing Sarai as “woman” she is being identified as an “impersonal object” that does not have any say in her fate. She became an object of opportunity for the unfortunate Abram. He took Sarai and made her a display. Sarna states that “he appears to place his wife’s honor in jeopardy through misrepresentation of their relationship.” Abram no longer acknowledged her as his wife, but as his sister. Hamilton states that Abram could be following an Islamic law which states, “You are no longer my wife: you are as a sister to me.” As a result, Abram was basically stating that his actions were a divorce declaration. Sarna, on the other hand, will provide the option that “whoever wished to take Sarai to wife would have to negotiate with her ‘brother.’ In this way, Abram could gain time to plan escape.”

361 Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 116. Sailhamer further states, “The promise looks as if it will fail. In the face of such a threat, however, the narratives show that God always remains faithful to his word and that he himself enters the arena and safeguards the promise. The purpose of such a recurring narrative theme is to show that only God can bring about his promise.” Ibid.


363 Sarna, *Genesis*, 94.


365 Sarna, *Genesis*, 95.
the situation well as he states, “Abraham is a desperate man who will act in prudential and unprincipled ways, even endangering Sarah to save himself.”

The real problem was that Abram acted out of fear, and used his wife in an attempt to overcome his situation. Waltke states in a more condemning way saying that Abram “is willing to risk his honor and his wife’s purity to advantage himself.”

According to Gen 12:16, because Abram was dishonest in his actions, and Pharaoh suffered. Gen 12:17 states that God “plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.”

Abram’s sin was exposed. Upon Pharaoh’s discovery, he summoned Abram and questioned him about his integrity. Wenham contends that Abram’s silence admits to his guilt. However, Pharaoh did not usurp the situation and keep Sarai, rather he returned Sarai to Abram. Hamilton contends, “Upon learning of his embarrassing mistake, he immediately returns Sarai to her husband. Furthermore, the king’s three questions addressed to Abram reveal that the pagan king knows that adultery is a moral evil.”

God was in control of the situation even though Abram’s fear looked to be insurmountable. This is ascertained by Sarna as he rightly notes, “Only divine intervention protects her honor, and she returns to her husband unviolated.”

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368 Hamilton notes, “This is doubtless a case of actual adultery between Pharaoh and Sarai, rather than potential adultery such as found in 20:3–4.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1–17*, 382. Hamilton explains, “Sarai is not only asked to engage in deception, but in the process she becomes vulnerable and is eventually forced into cohabiting with one other than her husband.” Ibid.


371 Sarna, *Genesis*, 94.
and Delitzsch sum up the narrative by stating that Pharaoh “gave her back to him, with a reproof for his untruthfulness, and told him to depart, appointing men to conduct him out of the land together with his wife and all his possessions.” The narrative almost appears as a modified repeat of Genesis 3.

Genesis 20:1–18 – Abraham, Sarai, and Abimelech

Gen 20:1–18 begins by stating that Abraham journeyed to the South, and ended up in Gerar (Gen 20:1). Again, he must have felt vulnerable; for he told Abimelech, the king of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister. As before, Abraham, apparently, wanted to make use of her beauty so that he could obtain favor with the king. However, this time the Lord came to Abimelech, in a dream, and told him that he was a “dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife” (Gen 20:3). As God told Abimelech that Sarah was Abraham’s wife, Abimelech attempted to justify himself by informing the Lord that both Abraham and Sarah told him that she was his sister. God instructed Abimelech that he was to return Sarah to Abraham or die. The next morning, Abimelech informed his servants of all that had happened the previous night. After this, Abimelech confronted Abraham about his plot. Abraham told Abimelech that he knew that God was not in Gerar, so he was afraid that Abimelech would kill Abraham for his wife. Upon hearing Abraham’s defense, Abimelech gave Abraham animals and servants, and told him to stay within his land.

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Key Words

The first key word to examine is בְּרֶק. The basic idea of the word בְּרֶק is an object being in close proximity to something or someone. The first way that the word בְּרֶק was used provided the implication that a sexual encounter had occurred. Abimelech did not have sex with Sarai (Gen 20:4), a person is not to have sex with his kin or a woman during her menstrual cycle (Lev 18:6, 14, 19); a woman is not to have sex with an animal (Lev 20:16); a woman is to be a virgin when she marries (Deut 22:14); the prophetess conceived (Is 8:3); warning about approaching a woman during her menses (Ezk 18:6).

373 Bill Arnold advises, “This adjective is also used to designate nearness of relationship (Lev 21:3; Ruth 2:20). Thus it is possible for Israel to be called a people close to God (Ps 148:14). Yahweh is the God who is near whenever his people call to him (Deut 4:7; Ps 34:18; 145:18).” Bill T. Arnold, “ברק,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 977.

374 Gane and Milgrom note, “In eight passages qrb denotes the sexual act as a whole. In the four instances in Leviticus (all in legal contexts), the verb is accompanied by an expression specifying the sexual relationship. In 18:6, 14, 19, it is l'gallot 'erwa, ‘to uncover nakedness,’ a phrase that this chapter uses in conjunction with qrb (20:18 par. 18:19 uses sakab instead of qrb). In 20:16 we find l'rib'a 'ota, ‘to have sexual relations with it [the animal].’ In the other instances the verb is used alone without further qualification. Deut 22:14 deals with a bridegroom who discovers at first intercourse (qrb 'el) that his bride is not a virgin. In Is 8:3 the result of qrb 'el is conception. In Ezk 18:6 (cf. Lev 18:19) and Gen 20:4 (cf. ng', ‘touch’ in v. 6), too, qrb by itself denotes a sexual act.” Gane and Milgrom, “ברק,” 138.

375 Leonard Coppes writes, “Abimelech affirms his innocence with regard to Sarah (Gen 20:4). Also, compare Deut 22:14, the case of the groom who ‘draws near’ and discovers no tokens of virginity in his bride; also Is 8:3 where the prophet ‘draws near’ his wife and she conceives. Perhaps this is the connotation of qarob in Ezk 23:5 where it is parallel to ‘lovers’ (m'ahabim) and in Ps 38:12 (cf. Ps 88:19). Leonard J. Coppes, “זָרַע,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 812.

376 Kuhlewein observes, “A series of apodictically formulated laws indicates the boundaries Yahweh establishes for sexual contact (qrb qal in the sexual sense): with blood relatives (Lev 18:6), with the wife of the paternal uncle (18:14), with one’s wife during menses (18:19; cf. Ezek 18:6), with animals (20:16). qrb qal is used in these texts; elsewhere similar prohibitions use verbs like → glh pi. or skb ‘to lie with.’” Kuhlewein, “ברק,” 1168.
The second word of this study is **naga**. The word means “to touch.” God kept Abimelech from “touching” Sarah so that he did not sin against God (20:6); Abimelech charged that if anyone “touched” Rebekah they would be put to death (Gen 26:11); Boaz commanded the young men of the field not “to touch” Ruth (Ruth 2:9); Proverbs states that “who goes in to his neighbor’s wife, and “touches” her will not be innocent (Prov 6:29); Israel committed adultery without any thought of restraint (Hos 4:2). It seems that when **naga** is used sexually it is with a prohibition.

### Key Phrases

The first key phrase for Gen 20:1–28 is “caused me to wander” (**naga**) (Wåt.hi rv<ôa>). In Gen 20:13 Abraham states, “God caused me to wander from my father’s house.” Abraham made his claim

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377 M. Delcor surveys, “ng’ qal is often constructed with be and with ’el (e.g., Num 4:15; Hag 2:12), ’al (Judg 20:34, 41 ‘to overtake,’ subject ‘disaster’), ’ad (e.g., Is 16:8 ‘to reach to’), with the accusative (Is 52:11, Job 6:7), or without object (Esth 3:1; Neh 7:72 ‘to reach’). The local principal meaning ‘to touch’ varies from static contact (1 Kgs 6:27 ‘so that the wings of one cherub touch one wall, and those of the other wall, while wing touched wing in the middle’), to simple contact (e.g., Lev 5:2), with unclean things), to violent blows (Gen 32:26, 33 of the thigh; Job 1:19, of the storm; militarily, Josh 8:15, ni.; ‘to injure, do harm,’ Gen 26:11, 29). The expression ‘to touch a woman’ is a euphemism for sexual relations (Gen 20:6; Prov 6:29). ng’ is used figuratively or metaphorically, e.g., in 1 Sam 10:26 ‘the brave, whose hearts God has touched.’” M. Delcor, “**naga**,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 718.


379 L. Schwienhorst conveys, “The verb naga’ can also refer to the prohibited sexual approach of a man to a woman, which God intervenes to prevent (Gen 20:6), or which is vigorously warned against (Prov 6:29). The Old Testament does not, however, use naga’ as a euphemism for sexual intercourse itself, like the expressions yada’ (e.g., 4:1), bo’ el-issa (e.g., 38:2f.) qarab el-issa (e.g., Is 8:3), and sakab (Gen 30:15f); the verb refers to the treatment of a married woman by a man who intends a sexual relationship prohibited by law (Prov 6:29: adultery). In Ruth, naga’ probably does not have any sexual connotations, the opinion of many exegetes notwithstanding; as in 2 Sam 14:10, it refers to infringement of the rights of a defenseless widow.” L. Schwienhorst, “**naga**,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 206.
as a result of Abimelech’s charge. Abraham appears to be blaming God for his presence in Abimelech’s land. Kidner suggests the phrase alludes to the understanding that “gods caused me to wander.” Abraham attempts to make the claim that he was not culpable for being in Gerar. However, once he was there he had to protect himself. Ronald Youngblood asserts that means “to wander in a physical sense (Gen 21:14), to stagger because of drunkenness (Is 28:7), or to err or stray mentally, morally, or spiritually (Ps 95:10). Mathews builds upon this concept as he argues that “Abimelech’s polytheism may explain why the patriarch uses the plural verb ‘wander’ (hit’u) with God (Elohim) rather than the customary singular. Thus, Abram was maintaining that God had taken him from his community, and he had to defend himself from the perils before him.

The second key phrase for Gen 20:1–18 is “covering of eyes” (כָּבוֹץ עֵינֵי). In Gen 20:15, Abimelech told Sarai that he had given Abraham money to vindicate or “cover the eyes” from the act that had been done. Mathews states, “Cover the eyes’ (kesut ‘enayim) and ‘vindicated’

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380 Andrew Schmutzer observes, “Abimelech summons Abraham and indict him (vv. 8 –10). Abimelech’s dream-dialogue was itself a legal process with God acting as the judge and prosecutor.” Andrew J. Schmutzer, “Did the Gods Cause Abraham’s Wandering? An Examination of >הָלַךְ in Genesis 20:13,” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 35/2 (2010):155. He later states, “At its core the arraignment consists of two claims: (1) against adultery (v. 9a), (2) and against deception (v. 9b). The phrase हָלַךְ דִּבְרָלוֹ (‘so great a guilt,’ v. 9a) is Abimelech’s claim against adultery (cf. 9a) and a standard Near Eastern description.” Ibid.

381 Kidner, Genesis, 138.


383 Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 257–258. Mathews comments, “If this is not a simple grammatical accommodation, Abraham reaches an all-time religious low by granting such a concession to the pagan king.” Ibid.

384 W. R. Domeris records, “In the narrative section of the Pentateuch, ksh often has a sense of concealment. So Tamar in the guise of a prostitute covers her face with a veil (Gen 38:14–15). Rebekah veils herself in the presence of Isaac, indicating her respect, but she is not veiled in the presence of his servant, indicative of her authority over him (24:65). God ponders the wisdom of concealing (lit., covering) what he intends to do to
(nokahat) work together but differently in conveying the exoneration of Sarah."\(^{385}\) Abraham sinned against God, Sarah, and Abimelech. Even though Abimelech had the proof, he was sorry for his actions. Fredrick Holmgren remarks that “the taking of a wife from someone was a serious crime in the ancient world, for she was not only property, she was a sexual partner who would bear children and give future to her husband.”\(^ {386}\) Abimelech was wrong, even though he did not know that Sarah was Abraham’s wife, so he made every attempt to correct his culpability.

**Genesis 20:1–18 in the Wake of Research**

Abram’s intense desire for self-preservation led to deception and the resultant aberrant behavior. This can be illustrated by Abraham’s actions. Abraham, for whatever reason, decided to go to Gerar.\(^ {387}\) As Abraham approached Gerar, Abimelech advanced toward him. Once this occurred, the deception began, for Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister. Abimelech took him for his word.\(^ {388}\) Kidner presents a reason why as he shares, “In heathen religion the

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\(^ {385}\) Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 258. Mathews explains as he states, "‘Cover’ (kasa) essentially means to conceal; here, the metaphorical sense is that the forfeiture of sliver hides the woman’s shame wrongly brought by the king’s actions.” Ibid.


\(^ {387}\) Hamilton states that “this narrative makes plain that God’s judgment is directed not at Abimelech per se but at the whole area of Gerar, its women, and the future population growth of Gerar.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 18–50*, 62. Hamilton explains this idea as he states, “Abimelech knows, if he is indeed guilty, that not only he but his entire kingdom stands to suffer the consequences of the king’s trespass.” Ibid.

\(^ {388}\) Hamilton asserts, “The emphasis made here is that Abimelech is not by nature and conviction an individual of high moral principle.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 18–50*, 63.
holiness of a prophet was nearer magic than morality; so the reader can see better than Abimelech how far short of his title Abraham had just fallen in speaking to deceive.”  

The deception was that Abraham and Sarah attempted to present themselves as brother and sister instead of husband and wife. God overcame this obstacle by providing Abimelech with a dream (v. 3). In the dream, God warned him that Sarah was Abraham’s wife.

Abimelech’s dream revealed to him that Sarai was married to Abraham. Mathews notes, “God himself was the one restraining (hasak) Abimelech’s sexual appetite so that he did not permit the king even to ‘touch’ (naga’) Sarah. Hebrew hasak (‘keep in check’) describes divine interference in the evil actions of humans (e.g., 1 Sam 25:39).” Hamilton asserts that “implicit here is the idea that all peoples are obligated to the morality of the patriarchs’ God about adultery, the violation of which – even if done in ignorance – brings the most damaging consequences.” God made this clear by stating that Abimelech was “a dead man.” Hamilton argues, “God says to Abimelech that adultery would have been a sin against God, not against the

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390 Sarna states, “While abhorrence of incest is nearly universal, the definition of prohibited kinship marriages varies widely among societies. Where descent is traced solely through one parent, mating between half-siblings is often socially acceptable and is not considered consanguineous.” Sarna, *Genesis*, 143.

391 Wenham observes that the phrase “she is married” (אִשֶּׁה אֵאִם) is used here. He notes that the term means “owned by an owner.” He resumes, “A wife is seen as much more than the property of her husband: she is his alter ego and one flesh with him; she is at least her husband’s most precious possession, and to take her is the worst kind of theft.” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 70.


393 Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 61. Hamilton contends that “committed by Israelite or non-Israelite, adultery is an affront to deity.” Ibid. Sailhamer notes, “The surprising outcome of God’s visit of Abimelech is that he responded immediately by rising early in the morning and declaring his dream to his servants and then to Abraham.” Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 162. Sailhamer continues his thought by writing: “The last statement in v. 8 shows
husband.” The dream changed everything. This dream allowed Abimelech to show more understanding of God’s sovereignty than Abraham – God gave laws to inform man of his wrongdoings. Hamilton contends that Abimelech’s “crime is simply ‘taking’ (short of sexual congress) another man’s wife.” In order to convey the appropriate message the narrator alerts the reader that Abimelech had a dream, and this dream provided him wisdom – fear of the Lord. Sarna contends, “The phrase ‘fear (of) God’ is used overwhelmingly in connection with situations that involve norms of moral or ethical conduct. Its application is universal, transcending religious or national divisions.” Even though Abraham did not show fear of the Lord, Abimelech did. Thus, the story line continues from Genesis 18:1–15, God, in spite, of man’s shortcomings is able to provide. Sarna confirms this as he notes, “Without doubt, from the Narrator’s point of view, this would be consistent with the miraculous renewal of her vitality by divine grace so that she may bear a child.”

the mood of the Philistines: ‘the men were very much afraid.’ Like the sailors and the king of Nineveh in the Book of Jonah (1:16; 3:6–9), the Philistines responded quickly and decisively to God’s warning.” Ibid.

394 Ibid., 63.

395 Hamilton maintains that the “law involves a man taking an oath and paying damages to the husband when he had taken the wife of another man on a journey. . . . Just to take a married woman on a trip without her husband’s consent is a crime.” Ibid., 69.


397 Sarna, Genesis, 143. Mathews remarks, “‘Fear of God’ (yir’at ’elohim) means in this context conformity to a moral code of behavior (e.g., Exod 20:20), not the absence of religion. ‘The fear of God’ characterizes rulers who act justly (42:18; 2 Sam 23:3; 2 Chron 26:5; Neh 5:15).” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 256–257.

398 Kidner argues, “Abraham’s reply confessed to a pattern of mistaken choices which is in essence every man’s with its fallibility in the realms of facts, values, and motives. The confession is marred by an attempt to shift blame, Adam-like.” Kidner, Genesis, 138. Wenham notes that “Abimelech does not deny his action but claims he was misled and acting in total ignorance of the true situation.” Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 71.

399 Sarna, Genesis, 141.
Gen 2:24 presents the image the foundation for unity and solidarity – a man and a woman uniting to become one flesh. They become one flesh to obtain a goal – be successful in creating an ideal union. Abraham and Sarai were united in such a relationship. However, Abraham, because of his fear, told Sarai to state that she was his sister. While it was true that she was his sister, they had taken an oath a kinship that supersedes her being his sister. God instituted the ideal union so that as the two become one flesh – they took an oath of permanent faithfulness to one another. Their goal was to join together so that they are able to overcome their weaknesses, and not manufacture the possibility for failure for others.

**Genesis 26:6–11 – Isaac, Rebekah, and Abimelech**

Gen 26:6–11 appears to be a re-occurrence of Gen 20:1–18 the only difference are the names. Isaac journeyed Gerar (Gen 26:6). Once he was there, the men of the town asked about his wife. He, too, must have felt vulnerable; for he told them Rebekah was his sister. As before, Isaac, apparently, wanted to make use of her beauty so that he could obtain favor with the king and town. However, this time the Lord allowed Abimelech to see Isaac fondling Rebekah. Abimelech confronted Isaac about his deceptive plot. Isaac informed Abimelech that he was afraid that Abimelech would kill him for his wife. Upon hearing Isaac’s excuse, Abimelech chastised him for his deceptive plan in that it could have brought “guilt upon” the people of Gerar.
Key Word

The key word of this study is וָאָכַשׁ. It means “be guilty,” “to offend,” or “to trespass.”

The fundamental meaning of the word presents the idea of some type of culpability on the part of an individual. Isaac brought “guilt” upon the Philistines because of his deception (Gen 26:10). Even though an act was not committed, the Philistines were guilty of being part of a plot. A person was guilty and responsible for being a part of an offense. As before, Gerar was culpable to God, and not to Isaac nor Rebekah. The strain was between individuals, but the larger tension was between God and man. God was the initiator of the ideal union. Thus, Gerar was guilty for being a part of the story by not investigating the matter for themselves.

Another aspect of the word וָאָכַשׁ was that a payment was required. Livingston asserts that “restitution must be made according to cash values, plus a twenty percent cash penalty.”

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400 Herbert Livingston remarks, “The primary meaning of the word ‘asham seems to center on guilt, but moves from the act which brings guilt to the condition of guilt to the act of punishment.” G. Herbert Livingston, “וָאָכַשׁ,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 78.

401 Eugene Carpenter and Michael Grisanti determine, “The ‘asam serves as a technical term for an offering that represents the guilty person’s attempt to absolve wrongdoing by making restitution. The ‘asam was actually a penalty paid in the form of a sacrificial offering to God. The sacrifice did not relieve the offender of his duty to make full restitution for any loss he had caused another.” Eugene Carpenter and Michael Grisanti, “וָאָכַשׁ,” in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 554.


403 Numbers 5:6 –7 states, “Speak to the children of Israel: ‘When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the Lord, and that person is guilty (וָאָכַשׁ), then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass (וָאָכַשׁ) in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged.”

404 Livingston, “וָאָכַשׁ,” 79.
The restitution that was paid was known as a ישן. Livingston contends, “The restitution that was paid was known as a ‘isham. Responsibility for sin, punishment, and even the aftermath of punishment. Perhaps, one may hold that the ‘isham connotes the totality of alienation from God, including its consequences.” Livingston, “‘isham,” 79.

R. Knierim implores, “The primary viewpoint is the situation of obligation that follows a judgment, the state of being obligated, and its fulfillment. Functional aspects appear to belong more to the presupposed sense of the situation of obligation than to be expressed in the word itself.”

Key Phrase

The key phrase for Gen 26:6–11 is “showing endearment” (Registrar). The word变速箱 means “to laugh.” Yet, there is more than “laughter” that was taking place in v. 8. Abimelech saw Isaac “showing endearment” to Rebekah. R. Bartelmus remarks, “Isaac is ‘fooling around’ with his wife, obviously with her full consent.” This act allowed Abimelech to know that Isaac and Rebekah were not brother and sister, but man and wife. Lugwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner state how the phrase “showing endearment” (Registrar) is to be taken as “fooling around,” as they pronounce that when the word变速箱 is used with变速箱 it means “to dally with or

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405 Livingston contends, “‘isham may denote acts of sin, responsibility for sin, punishment, and even the aftermath of punishment. Perhaps, one may hold that the ‘asham connotes the totality of alienation from God, including its consequences.” Livingston, “‘isham,” 79.

406 R. Knierim, “‘isham,” in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 192. Knierim maintains, “The understanding assumed in an ‘shama situation is apparently that guilt-obligation and resolution of liability for injury will create the prerequisite for the restoration of a disturbed situation.” Ibid., 194. He explains by writing: “The word has a theological character insofar as human liability is the expression, cause, or result of divine judgment or activity and is related to this divine involvement as a human situation or resolution. This relationship is directly visible where Yahweh’s privileges are violated. And it is implicitly the case where Yahweh’s jurisdiction is violated through the infringement of civil rights or of people. The reason for this theological quality of ‘shama is in the view that human guilt-liability involves God basically and entirely.” Ibid.


408 Bartelmus, “Registrar,” 68.
fondle a woman as in Gen 26:8.” Wenham explains the situation of Gen 26:8–9 as he notes that Abimelech “saw them ‘playing’ (ךכוס), clearly a euphemism for intimacy only proper between spouses.”

Textual Turning Points

Gen 26:6–11 is significant for the material that it holds; for, it provides information that could be considered as a textual addition. The reason for this suggestion is that the information contained in these verses looks to be a reproduction of Gen 20:1–18 and 12:10–20. God’s chosen family found themselves in a strange land during a famine/destruction. Once they were in the land they attempted to deceive Abimelech/Pharaoh into thinking that the man and woman were brother and sister – not husband and wife. The only difference that can be noticed – with Abraham and Sarah, God informed Abimelech through a dream and Pharaoh with plagues. And, as far as Isaac and Rebekah were concerned, Abimelech saw Isaac “showing endearment” with his wife. These three episodes seem to have a connection with one another in that the ideal union was challenged because the key players were not in the ideal location.

Genesis 26:6–11 in the Wake of Research

The union between the man and woman in its original context was to be guarded. This meant that the union between the man and woman was not to be treated carelessly. The

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410 Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 190.

411 Mathews notes, “The term is used of toying with someone (Judg 16:25) or revelry (Exod 32:6). The term also has sexual connotations when Potiphar’s wife charges Joseph with degrading her by sexual advances (39:14, 17).” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 406.
woman, in a sense, was the personal property of the man. Yet, the union between the man and woman was to be valued and respected. Hamilton expounds on this idea as he notes, “To touch Rebekah means to abuse her sexually. Nobody is to touch (naga) Rebekah as Isaac has touched (sahaq) her.” Mathews enhances this concept as he writes, “Proverbs 6:9 forewarns anyone who ‘touches’ (nogea’) a married woman by sleeping with her. The appearance of the related term in 12:17 for the ‘disease’ (nega’) endured by the Egyptians implies that plague was likely the punishment Abimelech feared.” Yet, the manner that Abimelech came to know that Rebekah was Isaac’s wife was that he saw Isaac touching Rebekah with endearment. The manner that Isaac caressed Rebekah was unmistakable – she was his wife. Isaac had the right to touch Rebekah in such a manner, and no one else did. This right came by the means of Gen 2:24 which emphasized that a man and a woman become one flesh emphasizing the shared commonness that they have with one another.

Summary

God instigated the ideal union. God’s intent was for one man to be united to one woman. The sex that the man and the woman shared with each other was to be an act to solidify this idea. According to Gen 2:24, sex was designed as an action that takes place between a man and woman – the two “shall become one flesh.” In the ideal world, the man and the woman had their individual roles, but outside of the ideal world lines became blurred.


413 Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 407. Hamilton asserts, “Isaac has missed the fact that in attempting to spare his own life he was risking the lives of everybody else. A whole city was put in jeopardy because one man wanted to escape jeopardy.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapter 18–50, 197.
All three of these last examined episodes seem to portray the patriarchs as deceivers, and using their spouses as “impersonal objects” to gain some type of advantage. Sarna suggests there was a purpose for these three episodes being arranged in the manner that they were. He states that “literary concepts and the norms of the ancient world, reiteration is a desirable and characteristic feature of the epic tradition. To the biblical narrator, repetition of the experience serves to emphasize and reinforce his didactic purposes.”

Strangely enough, all three kings appear to have a greater fear of God than Abram or Isaac. Abram and Isaac used their wives to exploit their situations. Yet, the manipulation of their unions produced greater tension, which could have led to death. Atkinson notes that “it was a sin of omission which ultimately involved a cowardice act and betrayal of their wives: they failed to draw near to the Lord, and failed therefore to trust him, when trouble struck.” God’s intervention protected the union between the man and woman.

Summary for this Chapter

In Gen 2:24, the author introduces the underpinning that fabricates the ideal “one flesh” relationship. It appears that Gen 2:24 instills the groundwork that is expected in the relationship between the man and the woman. The first union between man and woman seems to become the understood ideal union for all other unions to ensue. Sex was not to be the determinate for the

414 Sarna, Genesis, 94. Waltke contends, “Because of general revelation, people recognize the sacred character of marriage (cf. Lev 20:22; Deut 22:22). Adultery was considered a ‘great sin’ among many Semitic groups, as evidenced at Ugarit and in Egyptian marriage contracts.” Waltke, Genesis, 286.

ideal union, but a completing action for the ideal union. Yet, as this chapter has shown, sex acts afforded the man and the woman opportunities of various temptations that distorted the ideal union. Lust caused the Sons of God, Ham, Sodom, Judah, Potiphar’s wife, Abram, and Isaac to want something that they did not have. The yearning created by their lust became the initiative that led each one into a sub-standard sexual situation.
Chapter Four

Unions that Display Sexual Aberrance

Sex within the confines of the ideal union (Gen 2:24), provided the method by which the couple could have offspring. One man and one woman united together to become one flesh. The offspring was to be a natural consequence of the ideal union. The purpose was to continue what God had initiated. God created man to be one with Him; and God introduced the man to the woman so that they could have a relationship with each other. Sex was the foundational act that allowed them to come together as one. Palmer Robertson remarks, “Sex exists by God’s appointment not merely for personal pleasure, but for the blessings that stretch across the generations and into eternity.”416 These blessings were to be in having children, and continuing what God initiated through the training of these children (Prov 23:23–28).

Yet, with the introduction of sin and lust, men and women began to give more attention to the sex of a union rather than the actual union. This over-indulgent and imbalanced focus on sex led to sexual aberrance. The author of Genesis describes some sexual practices that went beyond the limits of God’s expected standard. These sexual practices which go beyond those limits, will be noted as aberrant behavior in the remainder of the paper; for they are explicitly noted as prohibitions of God. Robertson contends, “The fall of man into sin instantly and inevitably affected his sexual life. It is sad to see the many ways in which sin has put its ugly mark on human sexuality. But God’s word does not ignore the many problems created by sexual sins. This degenerating effect of sin on sex is seen quite clearly in the earliest chapters of

Unions, from the Book of Genesis, that are considered as sexually aberrant are: Gen 19:30–38 and Gen 38:6–10. In these passages, man or woman are controlled by their own desire, and not God’s.

**Genesis 19:30–38 – Union Between Parent/Child**

Gen 19:30–38 is a narrative that displays an incident of sexual aberrance. In these verses, the narrator states that Lot had two daughters that left Sodom with him. The reason they left Sodom was Lot and his family encountered sexual misconduct(s) – at least men desiring to rape men. This behavior caused the Lord to declare that He was going to destroy the city (Gen 18:20–21; 19:13–15). Upon hearing what the Lord was going to do, Lot and his daughters left and went to Zoar. However, Lot nor his daughters dwelt there, for Lot was afraid to lodge in Zoar. Perhaps Lot was afraid that the aberrance of Sodom extended well beyond the boundaries of Sodom, even into Zoar. Wenham remarks, “Having been reluctant to obey the command in the first place, he now shows that he does not trust the implied divine guarantee that he would be safe in Zoar.” Thus, they settled in the mountains outside of Zoar.

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417 Ibid., 87.

418 Mathews explains why Lot wanted to go to the town of Zoar. He states, “Lot’s request is the insignificance of the town of Zoar. The name ‘Zoar’ is derived from the size of the city, ‘small.’ In addition, he comments, ‘ועב (s’r) means ‘to be insignificant’ (BDB), i.e., small; ‘עב (n.m.), ‘small thing’ (2 Chron 24:24; Job 8:7; Ps 42:7). Zoar was also a refuge for fleeing Moabites (Is 15:5; Jer 48:34). Ancient and modern testimony converge on the modern site es-Safi for Zoar, located on the south bank of the wadi el Hesa (Zered), south of the Dead Sea in ancient Edom.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 240.

419 Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 60. Mathews contends that Lot “feared that the populace of Zoar would receive another divine inquiry, and he thus left, fearing a ‘second Sodom.’ His final abode was anything but a lush plain, only a ‘cave’ fit for the life of a recluse.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 244–245.
After staying there, Lot’s two daughters got him drunk, and had sex with him on two consecutive nights. Conceivably, their personal fears of not having children, and their learned behavior, from their days in Sodom, caused them to act in an aberrant manner. No matter what the reason, the Old Testament is unmistakable that this type of sexual conduct is an act of aberrant behavior. Not only did they uncover their father, but they purposefully had sex with him. Yet, the narrator does not condemn them for their actions. Steinberg notes, “The heinous act of incest witnesses to the women’s commitment to bear children: they will do whatever is necessary—go against all taboos—in order to have children.”

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420 Robertson points out that “the Mosaic legislation forbidding that a father have sexual relations with his wife’s daughter clearly shows God’s attitude toward incest (Lev 18:17).” Ibid., 116.

421 Joseph W. Smith, III remarks, “The Old Testament is extraordinarily specific in its regulations on this topic and fairly broad in terms of which family relationships are prohibited: Leviticus 18 introduces a lengthy section on incest by insisting, “None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness;” the chapter then proceeds to forbid sex with one’s father, mother, stepmother, sister, half-sister, stepsister, granddaughter, aunt, uncle, uncles’ wife, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law—also enjoining relations with a woman and her daughter, and with a woman and one of her grandchildren (Lev 18:6–18; see also Deut 27:20–23). Leviticus 20 repeats many of these ordinances, with specific punishments in several cases: banishment for sex with a sister or half sister, childlessness in the case of an aunt or sister-in-law, and the death penalty for relations with a father’s wife, a daughter-in-law, or with both a woman and her daughter (Lev 20:11–21).” Joseph W. Smith, III, Sex and Violence in the Bible: A survey of Explicit Content in the Holy Book (Phillipsburg: P and R Publishing, 2014), 81.

422 Steinberg, Kinship and Marriage in Genesis, 73. Joseph Smith further remarks, “Though the writer passes no judgment on these degraded actions, he does point out in later verses that the two unions here yielded the Moabite and Ammonite races, both of which were to remain long-term enemies of Israel throughout its subsequent history.” Joseph W. Smith, III, Sex And Violence in the Bible, 83. Baldwin points out, “The Moabites worshiped a fertility god and indulged in orgies which beguiled the Israelites on their way into the promised land (Numbers 25). Ammon became noted for cruelty not only in war (Amos 1:13) but even in religious observance (Lev 18:21), for Molech was the Ammonite god who demanded child sacrifice.” Baldwin, The Message of Genesis 12–50, 80.

423 Steinberg, Kinship and Marriage in Genesis, 72. Steinberg explains her statement as she comments, “Although their actions ultimately provide for the continuance of their father’s line, the text never specifies that in having sexual intercourse with their father the daughters are concerned to perpetuate their father’s lineage. Their desire to obtain offspring through their father, while it accomplishes the former, appears, rather, to be motivated by concerns for their own social standing. Lot’s drunkenness renders him passive, and presumably nearly unconscious, throughout the episode. His inactivity contrasts with his daughters’ initiative in working to preserve a family.” Ibid. 72–73.
impulsively to satisfy their desire to have offspring. Their strategy was successful, for they got their father drunk and had sex with him to have children – both daughters had sons.

Key Words

The purpose of this analysis is to quickly compare and contrast how the words יד and נטף were used. As a reminder, these words have already been examined within this research. After consideration of both words, one can come to comprehend that both words can have a sexual connotation. Adam “knew” (ידע) his wife and she bore and conceived (Gen 4:1, 25); Cain “knew” his wife and she bore and conceived (Gen 4:17); the Shunammite cared for David, but she did not “know” him (1 Kgs 1:4); as in the narrative in question, Lot’s daughters decided to make their father drunk so they could “lie” (נטף) with him (Gen 19:32); Rachel allowed Leah to “lie” with Jacob for mandrakes (Gen 30:15); Shechem took Dinah and “lay” with her (Gen 32:2, 7); Reuben “lay” with Bilhah, his step-mother (Gen 35:22); Potiphar’s wife tried to get Joseph to “lie” with her (Gen 39:12–14); Eli’s wicked sons, Phinehas and Hophni, “lay” with women who assembled at the temple (1 Sam 2:22); Amnon overtook Tamar, his sister, “lay” with her (2 Sam 13:14). But, if there is a noticeable difference between the two words, William Williams notes it. He states, “Sexual intercourse of a type approved by the community is usually described by יד’,

424 Waltke notes, “Her commendable loyalty to her father and her concern for his social immortality is tarnished by her immoral scheme, born out of fear, not faith.” Waltke, Genesis, 280.

425 Steinberg observes, “Lot is so old that he cannot do what men typically do, that is, take care of their families. Lot’s advanced age may play a part in Lot’s passivity when his sons/grandsons are conceived; he is not even aware of his sexual role when he fathers children through his daughters. Twice Lot’s daughter get Lot drunk, and each time he unknowingly has sex with one of them. Verse 31 suggests that Lot has never acted according to the role expectations of Israelite men, which stands in contrast to Abraham’s seemingly exemplary behavior.” Steinberg, Kinship and Marriage in Genesis, 75–76.
but the word skb was used to denote sexual relations that were illicit.”⁴²⁶ This bears out as a true statement in the story of Lot.

**Genesis 19:30–38 in the Wake of Research**

Lot’s two daughters acted in a manner that was not acceptable in any culture. They decided to get their father drunk so that they could become impregnated by him. But, the narrator seems to allow the daughters to justify their actions. According to the narration, Lot’s two daughters decided that once they escaped certain death they needed to provide an heir for themselves. In the minds of Lot’s daughters, Lot had long seen the time where he could adequately provide for his daughters. Thus, they took matters into their own hands. Sarna remarks that “the daughters do not act out of lust.”⁴²⁷ The idea of sex for sex does not appear to be the purpose for their exploits. Instead, they want to produce offspring for their father to secure placement within the land. The problem was in the manner that they went about fortifying their future safety.⁴²⁸ Mathews states, “The intent to ‘preserve our family line’ was honorable, but the means of incest was deplorable (e.g., Lev 18:6–18). That it was so understood by the daughters themselves explains why they had to trick their father through drink.”⁴²⁹ The two daughters give

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⁴²⁷ Sarna, *Genesis*, 139.

⁴²⁸ Hamilton notes, “Earlier the father was willing to use his daughters for sexual purposes without their consent. Now they will use their father for sexual purposes without his consent. The difference between the two, however, is that in the first instance sex was offered for titillation and gratification of the lust of the townspeople. The second does not emphasize the orgiastic.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50*, 51.

⁴²⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 245. Mathews notes, “By this humiliation of Lot, we remember the survivor Noah, whose son disgraced him when the patriarch lay drunk (9:21–24). At least Noah ‘knew’ (‘found out,’ 9:24) his deception, whereas Lot is never said to have learned. By adding that Lot was ‘unaware’ (vv. 33, 35), the author wants it clearly understood that the hapless man was sexually exploited.” Ibid.
the impression that they knew that their actions were reprehensible, for they got their father so intoxicated that he would not know what took place. Their actions display the sinful ideas that they had learned in Sodom. Davidson remarks that “the effects of living in wicked Sodom were apparent in their incestuous acts as well as in the capacity for drunkenness to the point of insensibility on the part of their father.” Their aberrant behavior was horrendous enough, but their acts created children and more problems. Von Rad notes this as he states, “The fact that Lot’s daughters are in no wise ashamed of the origin of their children, but rather proclaim it openly forever in their son’s names” is appalling. This reprehensible act will continue to be a burden for these sons. Sarna explains as he notes that “most of their common history relations between Israel and these peoples were generally unfriendly.” Yet, what is most significant about this passage is that the narrator passes condemnation upon Lot’s incestuous family – “his life has become inwardly and outwardly bankrupt” because he did not follow the ideal pattern.

430 Kidner states Lot’s legacy “was destined to provide the worst carnal seduction in the history of Israel (that of Baal-Peor, Numbers 25) and the cruelest religious perversion (that of Molech Lev 18:21).” Kidner, Genesis, 136.

431 Keil and Delitzsch remark, “Not that they imagined the whole human race to have perished in the destruction of the valley of Siddim, but because they were afraid that no man would link himself with them, the only survivors of a country smitten by the curse of God. If it was not lust, therefore, which impelled them to this shameful deed, their conduct was worthy of Sodom, and shows quite as much as their previous betrothal to men of Sodom, that they were deeply imbued with the sinful character of that city.” Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 237.

432 Davidson, Flame of Yahweh, 431.

433 Von Rad, Genesis, 224.

434 Sarna, Genesis, 139. Gagnon observes that the narrator “finds the circumstances distasteful and undoubtedly employs the story to slander the origins of the Moabites and Ammonites.” Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice, 70.

435 Von Rad, Genesis, 224.
Genesis 38:6–10 – Judah and His Evil Sons

Gen 38:6–10 is a narrative stating that Judah took a wife for his first born son, Er. However, Er was wicked in the eyes of the Lord so He killed him. As a consequence, Judah told his second son, Onan, to take Er’s wife as his wife, and raise a son for Er. Yet, Onan did not want to raise a child for his brother. Therefore, every time that Onan went in to Tamar he allowed his seed to fall on the floor; for he did not want to produce an heir for his brother. This action displeased the Lord, so He killed him.

Key Word

יִבְמָה

The purpose of this investigation is to assess the meaning of the word יִבְמָה. The word can be found only twice in the Old Testament. These two occurrences are in Gen 38:8 and Deut 25:5–10. The word יִבְמָה was used to convey the idea that one was “to assume the responsibility to marry one’s widowed sister-in-law in order to raise up a male heir to the deceased brother.”

436 Ralph Alexander states, “The verbal root is only employed in two contexts in the Old Testament: Gen 38 and Deut 25. In Gen 38:8 the root is used by Judah to encourage his son, Onan, to marry Tamar, Onan’s sister-in-law, and to go in to her and raise up ‘seed’ to his brother, Er. The context clearly indicates that this meant that Onan was to have sexual relations with Tamar in order to beget a male descendant to carry on Er’s name.” Ralph H. Alexander, “יִבְמָה,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 359. E. Kutsch enhances by writing: “The root יִבְמָה refers to a special kind of relationship by marriage, i.e., the relationship between members of two families that has come into being through the marriage of persons belonging to these families. The crux of the relationship is defined by the directives in Deut 25:5–10. Here יִבְמָה relates the brother (יָבָם) of a man who has died without a son to the latter’s widow, who is termed יָבָם (or יַבָּם) in relationship to ‘her’ יָבָם. It is implicit in the term that the יָבָם is obligated to take ‘his’ יָבָם in levirate marriage.” E. Kutsch, “יִבְמָה,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 368.

437 Alexander believes, “The verbal root is probably a Piel denominative verb derived from the noun יָבָם (‘brother-in-law’), the brother-in-law’s function is developed in the law of levirate marriage.” Alexander, “יִבְמָה,” 359. Kutsch insists, “The purpose of levirate marriage is to ‘raise up’ offspring, a ‘name’ for a man who had died without a son, to preserve his ‘lineage’ in the clan or ‘in Israel.’ Protection and economic security for the widow are not mentioned in Gen 38 or Deut 25, but are achieved by levirate marriage.” Kutsch, “יִבְמָה,” 372.
This is called the levirate obligation.\textsuperscript{438} The levirate obligation is discussed in Deut 25:5–10.\textsuperscript{439} It states that a younger brother, if not married, has to take the widow of an older brother and provide him with a progeny.

**Key Phrase**

The key phrase for Gen 38:6–10 is “he spilled the semen on the ground” (טֵבָּא נַכֵּד). The actual interpretation of the word נַכֵּד is that Onan “spoiled,” “ruined,” or “destructed” himself upon the ground.\textsuperscript{440} D. Vetter comments, “The verb always refers to a ruin effected in the realm of community or individual experience.”\textsuperscript{441} Onan seemed initially to fulfill his duties, or, maybe, he agreed in principle to marry Tamar so that his father’s family saved face. Gunkel advises that “Onan does not publicly neglect fulfilling this fraternal duty. It must, therefore, have been a very well-established practice. But he thwarts the matter by trickery. His motive is selfishness.”\textsuperscript{442} So,


\textsuperscript{439} Deut 25:5–10. It states, “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. But if the man does not want to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, My husband’s brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, I do not want to take her, then his brother’s wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother’s house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him who had his sandal removed.’”


\textsuperscript{441} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{442} Gunkel, *Genesis*, 397–398.
he did not truly fulfill his responsibilities.\footnote{Gunkel remarks that “the ancient Israelite, if asked about the purpose of levirate marriage, would surely have maintained that this practice was carried out in love for the deceased so that his name may be preserved and so that his property may be passed on to heirs of his name (Deut 25:6; Ruth 4:10).” Ibid.}

He takes part in an act that brings “destruction” on his brother, and, in turn, brings the same upon himself.\footnote{J. Conrad, “тяго,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 588. Charles Devine suggests, “The father, Judah, is the executor, handing over his second son to the widow without question. The purpose of the custom is clearly indicated: the dead brother’s name is to be perpetuated, and so the issue of the marriage of Onan and Tamar shall bear Er’s name. Judah apparently acts as if under obligation, as if the levirate custom had the force of law.” Devine, “The Sin of Onan, Gen 38:8–10,” 327.}

Conrad contends, “According to Gen 38:9, when Onan spills his seed uselessly on the ground instead of begetting a son, thus avoiding his levirate obligation, he is in fact extinguishing another person, namely, his deceased brother, since now that brother cannot live on in his descendants.”\footnote{Devine observes, “The purpose of the Assyrian law, and perhaps also of that of the Hittites, is to recover the money paid by the father of the husband for the wife previous to the marriage ceremony. The woman at the marriage was in a sense bought and paid for, and hence if her husband died, the father of the dead husband reclaimed the price paid by giving the widow in marriage to his other sons.” Charles F. Devine, “The Sin of Onan, Gen 38:8–10,” The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 4/4 (Oct 1942): 331.}

Onan had purposefully disregarded his familial duty, and in a sense shed the blood of his brother. Perhaps God’s view of life and the commitment to the ideal union goes beyond conception; for He destroyed Onan for his actions (Gen 9:6). In addition, Keil and Delitzsch note, “This act not only betrayed a want of affection to his brother, combined with a despicable covetousness for his possession and inheritance, but was also a sin against the divine institution of marriage and its object, and was therefore punished by Jehovah with sudden death.”\footnote{Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch, 340.} He acted in a manner that went against his kinship to his brother. Onan had a moral obligation to his brother, but more importantly his responsibility was to his father.
God’s actions toward Er and Onan appear to be extremely harsh. Almost, to the point of being insensitive. In fact, Hamilton states, “Not since the days of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah has God taken the life of one who displeased him, and there it was groups who were annihilated.” Thus, one has to consider the data to determine why God chose the method that He did.

Judah had the responsibility to find his son, Er, a wife. This type of procedure was customary for ancient Israel. Abraham found a wife for Isaac, and Isaac found a wife for Jacob. Thus, Judah took it upon himself to find a wife for his firstborn. Yet, Judah’s actions become somewhat problematic. 1) The Bible states that Judah “took” a wife for Er. 2) Judah “took” the same wife for Onan. Mathews presents the problem as he comments, “Onan refused to impregnate Tamar, ejaculating on the ground because he did not want to reduce his share of the family inheritance. . . . His behavior possibly indicates that the men in Judah’s household had struggled for supremacy, as we have found it commonly in the households of the patriarchs Isaac


448 Mathews states, “In accordance with the custom of arranged marriages, Judah acquired a wife for his son (e.g., 21:21; 24:2–4; Exod 2:21; Judg 14:1–3).” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 715.

449 One has to wonder what type of woman was Tamar? According to Judah’s actions, he seemed to “take” women arbitrarily – a Canaanite woman and a temple prostitute. Mathews notes, “Tamar’s ethnicity is undisclosed, but commentators often assume a Canaanite lineage since the text does not indicate an Israelite connection.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 715. Mathews further states, “Conversely, one could argue that the identification of Judah’s wife as a Canaanite means that the silence of the text for Tamar’s ethnicity implies that she was Israelite. If she were of Canaanite background, matters were turning from bad to worse, since another generation would have married outside the Abraham family.” Ibid.

450 Hamilton comments, “The text does not record that Judah displayed any remorse over Er’s death. Instead, his sole concern is that his deceased firstborn not lack offspring. To prevent that, he instructs Onan, the second brother, to cohabit with Tamar. Note that Judah does not say to Onan, ‘marry her,’ just ‘go in to her,’ or ‘have sex with her.’” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50*, 434–435.
and Jacob.” Wenham furthers the problematic matter as he states, “Onan’s case is especially reprehensible, for God’s repeated promise to the patriarchs was that he would make them fruitful and multiply. Onan is thus deliberately frustrating the fulfillment of those promises.” Perhaps, Onan and Er committed the same sin – they had absolutely no regard for Judah, his family, or his family’s God. Wenham states, “The nature of Er’s sin is not divulged, ‘But the completely similar sentence and fate suggest a very similar sin’ to Onan’s.” Since Tamar appears to be blessed, it is feasible that Tamar truly attempted to keep her responsibilities, much like Ruth did with Naomi’s family (Ruth 1:16). Tamar was even commended by Judah for her righteousness (Gen 38:26). She could have brought charges against Judah for not keeping his commitment to her, but she did not.

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452 Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 367. Wenham suggests, “In the light of passages such as 1:28; 8:17; 9:1, 7; Ps 127; 128, it seems unlikely that the Old Testament would approve of systematic contraception, for it frustrates God’s purpose in creating mankind in two sexes.”

453 Devine insists, “The Mosaic law (Deut 25:5–10) had a determined sanction, as we have seen, for failure to perform the levirate duty. This sanction was not death, but a relatively mild penalty. Therefore, if Onan were killed by God simply because he failed in the levirate duty, we would be forced to admit that God punished Onan with severity beyond measure, and in fact, beyond the measure of the law which He later gave to Moses.” Devine, “The Sin of Onan, Gen 38:8–10,” 338.

454 Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 366. Wenham explains, “Lev 20:10–20 prescribes death or cutting off i.e., death at God’s hand, for a variety of sexual offenses. The main point thought is the Er deserved to die: it was not Tamar’s fault.” Ibid.

455 Yoel L. Arbeitman, “Tamar’s Name or is It? (Gen 38),” *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 112/3 (2000): 343.

456 Devine proposes that the levirate “sanction or penalty is severe enough: if the man refuse his duty, the woman brings him before the ancients in a public place and there she publicly insults him. The removal of the shoe was a sort of degradation of the man and indicated a loss of power and reduction to a low status, which is perpetuated by his being called the ‘unshod.’ Spitting in the face (or ‘before him’ as the text might be translated) was considered by Orientals as a sign of utter detestation and contempt.” Devine, “The Sin of Onan, Gen 38:8–10,” 328.
Summary

Gen 19:30–38 and Gen 38:6–10 are two clear cases of sexual aberrance. Both were aberrant for different reasons; yet, in both incidents, there was a blatant disregard for the ideal standard that God established in the Garden of Eden. Whatever reason, in both narratives, the individuals took matters into their own hands, and acted in a reprehensible manner that was in opposition to Gen 2:24. As previously stated, Gen 2:24 is the paradigm which one flesh unions are to ensue. However, the narratives in Gen 19:30–38 and 38:6–10 do not follow the paradigm. Instead, the narratives present stories of aberrant behavior. In Gen 19:30–38, Lot’s two daughters act in a manner that is against the ideal union by raping their father in order to produce an heir; and, in Gen 38:6–10, Onan volitionally performs an act where he attempts to stop the family lineage – he spills his semen upon the ground. Both of these acts can be seen as disgraceful in the sight of God and mankind for they are unacceptable in the shadow of the ideal as found in Gen 2:24.
Chapter Five

Ideal Unions

Genesis 41:45 – Joseph Marries Asenath

Gen 41:45 is a unique narrative in that Joseph marries an Egyptian woman. What makes this verse unique, is that Joseph did not marry within the family of Abraham. Yet, throughout the book of Genesis, unions that seem to be blessed are from the line of Abraham (Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebekah; Jacob and Leah/Rachel). But, Joseph unites with an Egyptian. What is surprising and different is that Joseph was commended for his loyalty and faithfulness. Thus, the key idea seems to be that Joseph worked hard to fulfill his obligations to the Lord and to this woman – the key for building an ideal union. Robertson makes a good point saying: “Virtually any marriage can work, so long as people are willing to surrender personal preferences for the greater good of a stable relationship.”

Key Word

The aim of this word study is to explore the meaning of the words נָּשָׁן. The process in which this will be attained is by searching how the words נָּשָׁן were used in the Old Testament. After conducting a lengthy search, the word could only be found once in the Old Testament. BDB suggest that for the meaning of the words נָּשָׁן is “the god speaks and he lives.”

James Hoffmeier helps develop this definition as he contends, “The centrality of the

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457 Robertson, The Genesis of Sex, 45.

‘preservation of life’ motif in the story is again underscored by the Egyptian name of Joseph, Zaphenath-Paneah (41:45). While there is no consensus on the precise etymology of the word, it is agreed that the final element, “neah, represents the Egyptian word ‘nh, which means life.”

Perhaps, Joseph was given a name that represented life because he was able to give life to Egypt during the seven years of famine. While no one can know definitively, A. S. van der Woude is correct when he suggests giving a new name to Joseph “could be a demonstration of particular honor.”

Key Phrase

The key phrase found in Gen 41:45 is “he (Pharaoh) presented/gave Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah priest of On for a wife” (וַיַּנֵּחַ וְאֵשֶׁנְתָּ הַתֶּבֶנֶּה לְפֶתֶפֶרֶה הַרְשֵׁב אֶל-אֹֹשֶׁנְתָּ). The giving of the bride appears to have been viewed as a distinct event with a formulaic significance. The following passages demonstrate how the phrase was used elsewhere in Genesis and point toward a formulaic use of the phrase. Sarai gave Hagar to Abram as wife (Gen 16:3); Laban gave Leah to Jacob as wife (Gen 29:21–23); Laban gave Rachel to Jacob as wife


461 C. J. Labuschagne remarks, “ןַנַּנְתָּ occurs with an appended בֶּרַסָּא in the context of marriage to describe the activity of the bride’s parents or of others with authority over the bride (Gen 16:3; 29:28; 30:4, 9; 34:8, 12; 38:14; 41:45; Exod 2:21, etc.), just as לֹעַה ‘to take’ describes the actions of the bridegroom or his parents (Gen 12:19; 25:20; 28:9; 34:4, 21, etc.). The bridegroom or his parents also use לַנַּנְתָּ as stereotypical language for the purchase of a bride (Gen 34:8, 12; 2 Kgs 14:9 = 2 Chron 25:18; with לֹעַה, cf Gen 34:4; Judg 14:2). לַנַּנְתָּ also indicates the presentation of the dowry to the daughter marrying or a wedding present representing a blessing (בֶּרַסָּא, Josh 15:19; in Judg 1:15 with יְבָה; בֶּרַסָּא is not limited to wedding presents, but in other circumstances other verbs are used, Gen 33:11; 1 Sam 25:27 [both with בִּי]; 2 Kgs 5:15 [with לֹעַה] and 1 Sam 30:26 [with לֹעַה].” C. J. Labuschagne, “עזר,” in Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 2 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 779.
(Gen 29:28); Rachel gave Bilhah to Jacob as wife (Gen 30:4); Leah gave Zilpah to Jacob as wife (Gen 30:9); Hamor pleaded with Jacob to give Dinah to Shechem to be his wife (Gen 34:8, 12); Judah did not give Shelah to Tamar so that she could be his wife (Gen 38:14). Furthermore, the wording is used in a formulaic manner in other Old Testament passages. Jethro gave Zipporah to Moses as wife (Ex 2:21); the Lord told His chosen people not to take wives from the Hittites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, Girgashites, nor the Amorites (Deut 7:3); a father was to give a virgin daughter to a man as wife (Deut 22:13f.); Caleb declared that he would give Achsah, his daughter, to the man that attacked Kirjath Sepher (Josh 15:16f; Judg 1:12f); God’s chosen people gave their daughters to the sons of the Hittites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Hebusites, and Amorites to be their wives (Judg 3:6); men of Israel vowed not to give their daughters to the Benjamites as wives (Judg 21:1); Saul stated that he would give his daughter, as wife, to the man that defeated Goliath (1 Sam 17:25); Saul told David that he would give Merab to be his wife (1 Sam 18:17); Saul gave Merab to Adriel the Meholathite as wife (1 Sam 18:19); Saul gave Michal to David as wife (1 Sam 18:27); Adonijah went to Bethsheba to plead with her to ask Solomon to give Abishag the Shunammite to be his wife (1 Kgs 2:17, 21); Jehoash, king of Israel, sent word to Amaziah, king of Judah, asking him to give his daughter to be his son’s wife (2 Kgs 14:9; 2 Chron 25:18); Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarah, his servant, as wife (1 Chron 2:35); Ezra reminds the exiles that God told His chosen people not to give their daughters to the sons of pagans (Ezra 9:12; Neh 10:31); Nehemiah’s reform forbade the giving of the children of God to pagans in marriage (Neh 13:25); Jeremiah told the captives to give their daughters to their sons so that they would not diminish as a people (Jer 29:6). These various passages of the giving of the bride further appear to have had some type of contractual elements
The contractual element becomes noticeable as one recognizes that a daughter was given to a man because there was some type of *moher* that called for an agreement.

**Textual Turning Points**

The textual turning point of Gen 41:45 is; “And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On.” There are at least four nuggets of information contained within this verse. 1) Joseph is given a new name; 2) Joseph’s new name looks as though it is separating him from his past; 3) Joseph is given an Egyptian as a wife; 4) Asenath is the daughter of an Egyptian priest. Strangely enough, the narrator does not have any misgivings about recording Joseph’s marriage to Asenath.

Hamilton observes that “after this point the narrator never shares the Joseph story nor does he mention Joseph’s Egyptian name or his Egyptian wife.”

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462 Lipinski notes, “The expression *natan bitto l’issa l’PN*, ‘he gave his daughter as a wife to PN,’ derives similarly from the terminology of contractual law (Gen 16:3; 29:28; 30:4, 9; 34:8, 12; 38:14; 41:45; Deut 22:16; Josh 15:16f.; Judg 1:12f.; 21:1; 1 Sam 18:17, 19, 27; 1 Kgs 2:17, 21; 2 Kgs 14:9; 1 Chron 2:35; 2 Chron 25:18; cf. Gen 29:19, 27; 34:9, 16, 21; Ex 22:16; Deut 7:3; Judg 3:6; 1 Sam 17:25; Ezra 9:12; Neh 10:30; 13:25; Jer 29:6; Dan 11:17). Even if the marriage was not viewed as a purchase, the family of the bride nonetheless had a right to expect financial compensation (Gen 34:12; Ex 22:15f.; 1 Sam 18:25), which might also take the form of services rendered (Gen 29:15–30; Josh 15:16f.; Judg 1:12f.; 1 Sam 18:17–27; cf. 1 Sam 17:25; 2 Sam 3:14). In the narrative of the two marriages of Jacob, Laban is to give him his daughter (Gen 29:19) as a reward (*maskoret*, 29:15; cf. 31:7, 41; Ruth 2:12) for services rendered. At the end of seven years, when Jacob objects to Laban’s deception, Laban promises also to give him the younger daughter ‘for the work’ (*ba’a*boda*) he will perform for him in seven additional years (Gen 29:27). The *b*’ in *ba’*boda is a *b*’ pretii, and is part of the full formula of the wedding contract: *natan bitto l’PN l’issa ba’*doba*mohar* (*habbetulot*) (1 Sam 18:25; cf. Ex 22:16) *b’mea* ‘orlot *pe*listim (1 Sam 18:25; 2 Sam 3:14). In addition to the *mohar* or its equivalent, we encounter in *mattan* another ‘gift’ *ex marito* (mentioned in Gen 34:12 after *mohar*). This is presumably an equivalent to Akk. *nudummu*, which was a kind of dowry (morning gift) or widow’s settlement. It is uncertain whether Gen 24:53a refers to this *mattan*, since the jewelry offered to Rebekah more likely corresponds to the *dumaqu* of Middle Assyrian laws. Such jewelry was intended to adorn the bride (cf. Is 61:10) and was given over to use only during the marriage. In contrast, the *migdanot* given to Rebekah’s brothers and mother could be *mohar* (Gen 24:53b). The latter, like the widow’s settlement and the groom’s present, must be distinguished from the *silluhim*, which the father gives to his daughter as a dowry (*natan*, 1 Kgs 9:16; cf. Mic 1:14), and which in the case of divorce he can take back (Ex 18:2, ‘*ahar silluheyha*, ‘in addition to her dowry’).” E. Lipinski, “*ra,*” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 99–100.

the giving of an Egyptian name and wife meant that Joseph was “completely encapsulated in Egyptian reality” but . . . “The narrator does not raise any question about it.” Wenham points out that “marriage into one of the top Egyptian families set a seal on Joseph’s promotion.”

Joseph was able to overcome the many obstacles in his life, and it appears that he was rewarded for being triumphant. The Pharaoh gave him a new name and a new wife, both of which were completely Egyptian.

The Notion of Genesis 41:45 in the Wake of Research

Joseph’s marriage to Asenath appears to be one of two unions discussed in Genesis that did not have any aberrant behavior associated with it. In fact, in association with Joseph’s new name it looks as though Joseph’s way of life was an indication for how man should live. Mathews gives substance to this claim as he states, “Although Genesis does not address Reuben’s loss of birthright explicitly, the author of Chronicles explains the favored status of Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, on this basis when referring to the transference of Reuben’s privilege to Joseph, thus granting Joseph a double portion (48:5–20; 1 Chron 5:1–2; cf. Deut 21:15–17).” Sailhamer rationalizes the reason as he contends that “in all the Book of

464 Brueggemann, Genesis, 334.

465 Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 397.

466 Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 627. Mathews furthers this idea as he writes: “The Chronicler’s explanation for Reuben’s loss is, however, derived from Genesis implicitly, which indicates that Reuben suffered Jacob’s disfavor (49:3–4). Luther observed the dissonance between Reuben’s and God’s regard for Jacob; the firstborn’s shaming of his father followed on the divine bestowal of the honored name ‘Israel.’ The affront to Jacob/Israel was an affront to the God, who had favored Jacob. Geography continues its importance in the narrative; ‘that region’ is the setting for this historic perversion of Israel’s family. The identification of Bilhah as ‘his father’s concubine’ is central to understanding the nature of Reuben’s transgression. Earlier Bilhah was always identified in terms of her relation to Rachel as her ‘(maid)servant’ (sipha), but here the narrative mentions only Bilhah’s relationship to Jacob.” Ibid., 627–628.
Genesis only Joseph is described as one who was filled with the Spirit of God (41:38).”\textsuperscript{467} Yet, there is a problem with Joseph’s union with Asenath. Mathews calls attention to this fact as he mentions that “Joseph’s marriage into the priestly family probably was deemed an honor in Egypt’s eyes, but was a consternation to the rabbis who balked at his marriage to the daughter of a pagan priest.”\textsuperscript{468} However, as previously stated, the narrator does not hesitate to affirm Joseph’s union. Thus, one has to wonder why? Perhaps Sailhamer asserts the answer as he remarks, “When God’s people respond as Joseph responded, then their way and God’s blessing will prosper.”\textsuperscript{469}

**Genesis 24:1–67 – Isaac Marries Rebekah**

Genesis 24 is the lengthiest narrative in the Book of Genesis, and it provides the report of how Rebekah was brought to Isaac. The story begins by stating that Abraham had grown old. He summons his oldest servant, and makes him take an oath. The oath stipulated that the servant was not to take a Canaanite wife, but a wife from Abraham’s land and family for Isaac. In addition, Abraham made the servant vow not to take Isaac with him. Then Abraham reminded the servant of God’s promise to him, he prayed for him, and sent him on his way. The servant took ten camels with him. When he arrived, he made the camels kneel by the well. Then, he prayed for success with his task. As he was praying, Rebekah, a beautiful virgin and the niece of Abraham, brought him a drink of water. After he had finished drinking, she gave the camels water. He

\textsuperscript{467}Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 235.


\textsuperscript{469}Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 235.
rewarded her for her kindness, asked about lodging at her home, and inquired about her family. He discovered that she was Abraham’s niece. Once the servant realized his great fortune, he followed Rebekah to her family and told them about his oath/mission, and how Rebekah fulfilled the promise. Laban and Bethuel, Abraham’s kinsman, acknowledged the presence of the Lord and gave their blessings. The next day the servant, Rebekah, and her maids departed to go to Isaac and Abraham. As they were traveling, they met Isaac. The servant told Isaac all that had happened, and Isaac made Rebekah his wife.

### Key Word

וַיְשַׁלַּח

The key word for Genesis 24 is בָּשַׁלָּח. It means “to swear,” or “to cause to take an oath.”

Victor Hamilton states, “To swear in the Old Testament was to give one’s sacred unbreakable word in testimony that the one swearing would faithfully perform some promised deed, or that he would faithfully refrain from some evil act.”

Abimelech saw that God had blessed Abraham so Abimelech requested that Abraham make an oath with him acknowledging that he would treat him with kindness (Gen 21:23). Rahab asked the two spies that she protected to take an oath that they would show the same kindness to her (Jos 2:12). Saul had David make an oath with him, promising that he would not destroy his descendants (1 Sam 24:22). A person making another person take an oath seems to recognize that he cannot accomplish a vital role in his life without the other person’s help. Therefore, in a state of vulnerability the weaker person ask the stronger

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person for a promise. Blane Conklin remarks, “An oath may involve an assertion concerning a state of affairs in the past or present. It may also involve a promise of something in the future. But an oath is more than a mere assertion or a mere promise.”

Thus, oaths were more than words of commitment between two people. It seems that oaths were a contractual acknowledgement that a person could not successfully obtain an element in his life without the aid of the other person, but God had to supersede the oath that was taken. In the various oaths taken the Lord was understood to be the witness of the oath (Gen 21:23; 24:3; Num 30:2–3; Jos 2:12; 1 Sam 24:22; 28:10; 1 Kgs 1:30).

The substance behind this factor was that God/god(s) was alive and sovereign (1 Sam 19:6; 20:3; 28:10; Jer 4:2; 12:16; 38:16; Hos 4:15).

When man took an oath he became accountable to God and not the person or the oath. Thus, man was to live out the sovereign resolve of God/god(s).

Hamilton contends that oaths become “a

472 Blane Conklin, _Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew_ (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 2. Later he explains that “an oath consists of two elements: (1) a statement of sincerity, or, an authenticating element; and (2) the actual content of the oath. An oath may elaborate on these elements or add others, but at a minimum, an oath must contain these two elements. Without the first, we are left with only an assertion or a promise. Without the second, we have the stuff of which profane ‘swearing’ is made.” Ibid., 4.

473 Tony Cartledge notes that oaths had “everything to do with the assurance that one would faithfully keep his or her word. Old Testament oaths consist of a promise that is strengthened by the addition of a curse, with an appeal to a deity (or even a human king) who could stand as the power behind the curse.” Tony W. Cartledge, “בָּשָׂר,” in _Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament_, vol 3 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 32. Hamilton remarks, “In such cases God, or a false deity, would be invoked to witness the truth and sincerity of that which was sworn, and by implication, to judge the one swearing if he should either be lying or fail to live up to his pledge in the days and years to come.” Hamilton, “בָּשָׂר,” 900.

474 H. Wildberger states, “Since sb’ indicates an irrevocable, total obligation with inescapable consequences in the event of nonfulfillment, the god called on as guarantor and guardian must be able to exercise absolute control over the speaker, who must regard him or herself as entirely subject to the god. As a result ‘to swear by Yahweh’ is practically synonymous with ‘to confess allegiance to Yahweh.’” H. Wildberger, “בָּשָׂר,” in _New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis_, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1296.

teaching method of God, a gracious instrument to help the weak faith of every generation to believe that God will someday absolutely accomplish the promises to his people, despite discouraging external circumstances.**476**

**Key Phrase**

The key phrase for Genesis 24 is לֹא־תִקַַּ֤ח אִשָּׁה֙ לִבְנִי מִבְנוֹת֙ הַֹֽכְנַע (do not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites). Abraham makes his servant state that he will not take a wife for his son from the daughters of the Canaanites, but he strengthens the statement by making his servant swear an oath to his assertion. However, Abraham does not explain his reasoning. Perhaps, as Sailhamer stated earlier in this paper, there were “two groups of mankind” within the lineage of Noah; “those who like Adam and Eve hide the shame of their nakedness, and those who like Ham, or rather the Canaanites, have not sense of their shame before God.”**477**

Thus, to Abraham the Canaanites were a people born under the curse of Ham. Moreover, the Canaanites, per Scripture, were a group of people cursed.**478** The biblical texts show the

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**477** Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 96.

**478** Ex 23:28: “And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.” Ex 33:2: “And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Jebusite.” Ex 34:11–14: “Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite. Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God).” Num 21:3: “And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities.” Deut 7:1–5: “When the Lord your God 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, and when the Lord your God 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. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus
Canaanites as an unruly people who needed to be driven out because they lusted after things that were not a part of God’s ideal plan for man. Atkinson notes that “according to many parts of the Old Testament, the Canaanites are one of the greatest sources of temptation to the people of God. The sexual perversions of the Canaanites were often associated with their religious drunken orgies.”

If this was the case for the Canaanites where Abraham dwelt, he realized that aberrant behavior was typical for the Canaanites. Then, there can be little wonder why Abraham made his servant take an oath stating that he would not find a wife for his son from the daughters of the

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you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.” Deut 12:28–32: “Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise. You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” Deut 18:9–14: “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.” Deut 20:17–19: “But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God. Josh 3:10: “And Joshua said, ‘By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites.’” Josh 17:18: “but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong.” Josh 24:11–14: “Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you – also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant. Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!”

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Canaanites. Abraham was aware of his oath with the Lord, and he knew that the people of God had to avoid the normal behaviors of the Canaanites, lest they become participants of the same type of behavior.\textsuperscript{480} God chose to give them land, and make them a nation of people. Therefore, they had a function, and that was to be the people of God.\textsuperscript{481}

\textbf{The Notion of Genesis 24:1–67 in the Wake of Research}

Abraham had grown old, and realized that he needed to find a wife for his son.\textsuperscript{482} Yet, his age hindered him from completing the task. Therefore, he had to ask his trusted servant to fulfill the undertaking.\textsuperscript{483} At this point in Abraham’s life he had come to recognize that he must trust in the provisions of God.\textsuperscript{484} The need in the narrative is for Abraham to find a wife for Isaac. But,

\textsuperscript{480} C. S. Cowles argues, “If the Israelites’ forty years of desert wanderings proved anything, it was that they were just as prone to idolatry, immorality, and wickedness as their neighbors.” Cowles insists, “Even if they had become a truly holy people and had been successful in purging the land of all Canaanite influence, they were still surrounded by idolatrous nations with all the risks of exposure and corruption. This did in fact occur many times in their subsequent history, with Solomon’s importation of foreign wives—along with their idolatrous practices—being only the most notorious.” C. S. Cowles, “The Case for Moderate Discontinuity: Response,” in Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 98.

\textsuperscript{481} C. S. Cowles expounds: “The assumption was that the Israelites were morally superior to the inhabitants of Canaan.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{482} Wenham comments, “‘Abraham was old and a good age.’ This phrase typically prefaces the last deeds or words of some great man (cf. Jos 13:1; 23:1; 1 Kgs 1:1).” Wenham, Genesis 16–50, 140.

\textsuperscript{483} Mathews notes, “This servant, unlike Eliezer (15:2), is not named, for it is his relationship to Abraham that is all important. Abraham’s total confidence in him is underlined by the comment that ‘he was in charge of all his affairs.’ Compare Joseph’s relationship to Potiphar (39:4, 6) and the pharaoh (41:41; 42:6).” Mathews, Genesis 11:27–50:26, 141. Miller adds, “Marriage was considered too serious a business to be left to young amateurs. Instead it was in the hands of mature matchmakers who understood, perhaps better than the young people themselves, the importance of personal compatibility and who also recognized the need for family respectability.” Charles J. Miller, “Love in the Spring,” Reformed Journal 6/6 (1956): 6. Jack Sasson adds: “Aside from giving us a sense of this man’s prominence, the two attributions work symbiotically: he is wise because he is old; he is important because he knows his master’s world intimately.” Jack M. Sasson, “The Servant’s Tale: How Rebekah Found a Spouse,” Journal of Near Eastern Studies 65/4 (2006): 249.

\textsuperscript{484} Brueggemann notes, “The narrative has novelistic features not unlike the Joseph narrative. It is quite extensive and moves in a leisurely but clearly disciplined way through its plot. Each scene is designed to serve a particular function, so that the whole is carefully shaped.” Brueggemann, Interpretation, 197.
the servant was not to find any wife Isaac, but “the proper wife.”

Therefore, Abraham made his servant take an oath: part of the oath that the servant had to take was to put his hand underneath Abraham’s thigh.

The notion of a “proper wife” seems to have been important to Abraham. In other words, the task that the servant was to undertake was not to be done haphazardly. Isaac’s wife was to have a part in securing God’s promise to him. Abraham’s death was imminent, and he would not be present to help Isaac live out God’s promise. So, Abraham wanted Isaac to have a wife to help him. Waltke comments, “He can count on God, but not on people. Abraham recognizes that the woman must also make a faith choice. If she refuses, she is unworthy.” Therefore, the oath that the servant made was not necessarily with Abraham, but with God. Sailhamer remarks, “Abraham’s desire that Isaac not take a wife from the Canaanites appear to be a further expression of the notion of the two lines of blessing and curse seen in Genesis 9:25–27: ‘Cursed be Canaan!’ but ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem.’”

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486 Waltke remarks, “This is a euphemism for genitalia (Gen 46:26; Ex 1:5; Judg 8:30).” Waltke, *Genesis*, 327.

487 Wenham states, “Since the Old Testament particularly associates God with life and Abraham had been circumcised as a mark of the covenant, placing his hand under Abraham’s thigh made an intimate association with some fundamental religious ideas. An oath by the seat of procreation is particularly apt in this instance, when it concerns the finding of a wife for Isaac.” Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 141.

488 Waltke, *Genesis*, 327.

489 Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 176.
Isaac’s wife had to have certain characteristics. These characteristics conceivably helped the servant to recognize the woman that God intended for Isaac. She had to have a certain physical feature – beauty; she had to be a virgin; she could not be a Canaanite; she had to have a willingness to work a farm life; she had to have a predisposition to care for others; she had to be willing to leave her country; she had to be from Abraham’s family. By knowing these characteristics, the servant could decipher the hand of God, and realize the “proper woman” when she stood before him. God’s hand of guidance played an important part of this narrative, for his hand led the servant to Rebekah much like His hand brought the woman to the man (Gen 2:22). Brueggemann states, “Use of the guidance motif is worth special attention. The term nahah (RSV, ‘led’) occurs nowhere else in Genesis.” God “led” the servant to the “proper woman,” and the servant was able to recognize her by his physical characteristics. However, the servant needed more than physical qualities, he needed to see some of her features in action.

There were certain occurrences that took place, within the narrative, that helped the servant to determine that Rebekah was the “proper wife.” It is one thing to have the physical features, but another to act upon those traits. Rebekah was a beautiful woman, but could she

490 Lieve Teugels makes a case that the narrative found in Genesis 24 is about Rebekah’s character. Lieve Teugels, “‘A Strong Woman, Who Can Find?’ A Study of Characterization in Genesis 24, with Some Perspectives on the General Presentation of Isaac and Rebekah in the Genesis Narratives,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 19/63 (1994): 89–104. He concludes: “Rebekah is the divinely sent helper. Her role is to pass the blessing on to a fit bearer of the next generation. The ‘divine hand’ is noticeable at several crucial points in her life. When she is born (Gen 22:20–24), Abraham is informed.” Ibid., 103.

491 Jacob Weinstein observes that “she would be more likely to sympathize with the new religious ideas which Abraham initiated. She would be less inclined to lead Isaac into the ways of the pagan neighbors.” Jacob J. Weinstein, “Isaac and Rebekah: The Jewish Conception of Love and Marriage as Compared with the Western Romantic Tradition,” *The Reconstructionist* 15/8 (1949): 9.

fulfill the duties and responsibilities that she needed to be Isaac’s wife. In the narrative, the servant took animals with him. Hamilton contends, “The ten camels and the luxuries the servant took with him were undoubtedly to serve as part of the mohar, the bride-price.” But, these animals seem to be more than a “bride’s payment,” they appear to be part of God’s plan to show the functionality of Rebekah to the servant. Mathews notes, “Divine providence led the servant straight to Rebekah whose attitudes and deeds show her to be cast very much in the mold of Abraham and a worthy wife for his son.” The servant was given a quick assurance that Rebekah was “the proper wife.” Abraham sent his servant away with prayer, and the servant meets Rebekah’s family with that same prayer.

Summary

This section was written to examine the key words and phrases of Gen 41:45 and Genesis 24 in light of Gen 2:24. Upon the earlier consideration of Gen 2:24, it was established that Gen 2:24 provides the foundation of the ideal union between the man and the woman – unity and

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493 Sasson notes, “In the ancient Near East, it was the practice in matters of discovering the will of the gods to seek affirmation, even when an answer was straightforward. From Mesopotamia, we know of such measures best in omen-taking, when repeating the inquiry, reformulating the question, or assigning the search simultaneously to diverse diviners improved the prospects for establishing reliability through multiple agreements. In Mari, there was also the appeal of establishing validity by diversifying the routes to the same truth: omen taking, dreams, and diverse forms of prophecy could combine to deliver corroboration. In Israel, likewise, the urim and thummim were recast even when the initial answer was as clear as a bell (for example, at 1 Sam 23:1–14). Later, when prophecy became a major mode for ascertaining divine intent, kings of Israel kept a large number of prophets around, so acquiring better control through harmony or contrast among pronouncements.” Sasson, “The Servant’s Tale,” 255.

494 Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50, 144.


496 Hamilton observes, “The girl proceeds to give the servant a drink. He had asked only for a sip (me ’at-mayim, lit., ‘a little water’), but she let him drink all he wanted (watt ’kal ’hasqoto, v. 19). Both the servant and the girl act quickly. He ran to meet her (wayyaras), and quickly (watt ’mahar) she lowered he jug onto her hand. These verbs, which emphasize speed, reinforce the quickness with which God gave the servant the sign.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50, 147.
solidarity. A union with these elements striving to become a “one flesh” union has to start between a man and a woman. They have to recognize that there are characteristics between the two of them that have the potential to form a proper union – the man and the woman have to have a united purpose. As noted in this section, the pharaoh wanted to reward Joseph for his accomplishments. He wanted Joseph to be accomplished in his life. The pharaoh recognized that Joseph had “the Spirit of God” upon him, so he chose a woman that would be fitting of that characteristic (Gen 41:37). He chose the priest of On’s daughter. In the other narrative, the servant was given a responsibility to find a “proper wife” for Isaac who had certain characteristics that Abraham thought were pleasing to God. When the servant found the woman with those features, he knew that she was God’s choice for Isaac. Thus, the unions found in Gen 41:45 and Genesis 24 can be comprehended as models to the prescription of divine intention. Joseph’s union with Asenath was put in place based upon him having the Spirit of God. Isaac’s union was based upon the characteristics given by Abraham and God. Thus, it is argued that these two unions can be viewed as models of the unions intended in Gen 2:24.
Conclusion

An Analysis of the Union Between the Man and the Woman

Gen 2:24 presents God’s ideal paradigm for the union between a man and a woman. It states that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The man and the woman have a purpose – to functionally become one (this is the goal). The discourse in Gen 2:24 helps refine the interests of a man and a woman into becoming a one-flesh union. It states that one man and one woman unite to become one without any outside influence. Thus, it is the ideal union between a man and a woman because it is expressed the intention of God for the one-flesh relationship. Furthermore, it appears from this study that the first union formed by God was to be the depiction of all ensuing unions. To demonstrate this an exegetical examination of select passages, depicting all the unions of Genesis, was done. Upon that evaluation, of this study, hopefully it has been shown that Gen 2:24 sets the groundwork for the relationship between the man and the woman, and becomes the standard for one flesh unions.

The first chapter of this paper was used to present Gen 2:24 as the ideal union, between man and woman. The way that this chapter achieved this was by examining the key words: “leave,” “cleave,” “one,” and “flesh.” Then a survey of the key phrase “one flesh” was reviewed, and the textual turning point was discussed. By assessing the key words, the key phrase, and textual turning point one discovers that God instituted the one flesh union. Relationships in general are complex, however, relationships between a man and a woman are full of twists and
turns. Yet, this chapter reveals that God created the ideal union as a foundational standard for all one flesh unions. One man uniting with one woman forsaking all distractions outside the union.

The second chapter had three sections on polygamy. The first section began with a presentation of Gen 4:19–24; Gen 29:15–30; and Gen 26:34–35 as unions displaying polygamy. This section concluded that polygamy challenges the ideal union as presented in Gen 2:24. In Gen 2:24, it was determined that the ideal union between the man and the woman was foundational for unity and solidarity. Polygamy challenges the ideal union in that it damages it. Lamech, Jacob, and Esau each took more than one wife, and appear to have had problems. If the ideal union, initiated by God as a one man and one woman relationship, is exceeded then the lines of becoming one-flesh become skewed. Polygamy exceeds the number in the relationship and the lines within the union become blurred. Instead of producing solidarity, polygamy introduces insecurity and jealousy among partners. These texts show examples of polygamy stemming from a defiant love: Lamech’s self-love, Jacob’s intense love for Rachel, and Esau’s love of his way over that of his parents. Each of these cases, Lamech’s boastful self-love, Jacob’s unbridled love for Rachel, and Esau’s love of his way instead of his parents led to deviations from the “one flesh” union.

The second part of this chapter presented another case of polygamy – Gen 16:1–16. The incident of polygamy, as found in this section, is presented as being culturally justified because of Sarai’s barrenness. But, because one man and two women were not God’s ideal, moreover, unacceptable; their polygamous relationship was fraught with difficulty. Gen 2:24 established the foundation of the unity and solidarity that is needed for a “one flesh” relationship. God made the ideal union as a paradigm; which was to become the basis for the family. God’s intent was for a
man and a woman to come together as one flesh, and for that union to produce progeny who
were to replicate the one flesh union. Abraham and Sarai were chosen by God to fulfill the one-
flesh union. Their descendants were to be shown the standard so that they could start new one
flesh unions and preserve the ideal paradigm. The relationship between Abraham, Sarai, and
Hagar was violent, filled with contention, and generally dysfunctional because it was not God’s
ideal for them.

The third section of this chapter is polygamous unions that displayed polygamy due to
family positioning: Gen 28:6–9; Gen 29:31–30:24; Gen 34:1–31; Gen 35:22; and Gen 38:2. The
texts, used in this section of this chapter, demonstrate that the progeny of Adam abandoned that
ideal union for family positioning, and the accompanying power and influence. Esau took an
additional wife to elevate himself in Isaac’s eyes; Jacob took Leah as a wife to please his uncle,
Laban. Then upon taking Rachel, the woman he loved, emotional chaos and dysfunction ensued.
The polygamous union caused tremendous discouragement between Leah, Rachel, and even
Jacob. The disappointment continued, and would lead to Jacob’s sons reacting against their
father. Their reactions included murder (Simeon and Levi), an incestuous adulterous relationship
(Reuben), and marrying a foreign woman (Judah), all of which were acts against Jacob’s wishes.
Each of these examples are occasions of family positioning where the various individuals
adopted their own ideal over the ideal of the “one flesh” union. These acts reveal the deviance
that is created when one has no regard for the divine intent provided in Gen 2:24. The deeds
committed by the various sons broke down family relationships, and led to more sexual
disharmony that breached the norms setup in Gen 1:26–28.
The third chapter had two sections looking at how lust can cause a deviation from the ideal union of Gen 2:24. The first section presented Gen 6:1–3; Gen 9:18–25; Gen 19:1–11; Gen 38:11–30; and Gen 39:7–20 as unions dictated by lust. The ideal union instituted a union that was to be between one man and one woman. Gen 2:24 presents this as the foundation for the ideal “one flesh” relationship. The first union between man and woman seems to become the understood ideal union for all other unions to ensue. Sex was not to be the catalyst for the ideal union, but an act of completing the ideal union. Yet, this chapter showed, sex acts provided men and women with opportunities for temptations that altered the ideal union. Lust allowed the Sons of God, Ham, Sodom, Judah, and Potiphar’s wife to want something that they did not have. The desire formed by their lust became the initiative that led each one into a sub-standard sexual position. Their desire was to be for one another. By allowing lust to go outside the ideal relationship, one’s desires can lead to aberrant behavior such as – debauchery, rape, homosexuality, fornication, and other sexual deviant behaviors.

The second section, of this chapter, analyzed unions that used sexual lust for personal gain: Gen 12:10–20; Gen 20:1–18; and Gen 26:6–11. The summary, as found within this section of this chapter, recognized that God created an ideal union between a man and a woman (Gen 2:24). Yet, man can exploit the sex from his personal union as a commodity for his gain. But, God did not mean for sex to be misused. Instead, He designed it to solidify the man and woman within their union; Gen 2:24 states that the two “shall become one flesh.” Although Gen 2:24 states that the two shall become on flesh, the second section of chapter three shows that Abraham and Isaac used Sarah and Rebekah (respectively), as possessions for personal gain. In all three passages, the pharaoh/king were deceived into thinking the Sarah or Rebekah was a sister to
Abraham or Isaac. But, Sarah and Rebekah were wives to Abraham and Isaac. According to Gen 2:24, it was not God’s intent for man to exploit the union between a man and a woman.

The fourth chapter presented unions that display sexual aberrance. Lot’s daughters got their father drunk and then had sex with him; and, Judah’s sons seem to have done something sexually that caused God to annihilate them. The passages that were used: Gen 19:30–38 and Gen 38:6–10. These passages showed that mankind can act unbecomingly to the Lord with his sexual acts. Lot’s daughters raped him on consecutive nights. Judah’s sons performed inappropriately as they abused the intent of the ideal. This chapter concluded with the notion that any sexual act found outside of the ideal union is sexual aberrance. The sexual aberrance seems to be an issue because God, according to Gen 2:24, created sex to enhance the union between a man and a woman (sharing oneself with another so that a man and a woman become one).

The fifth chapter presented Gen 41:45 and Genesis 24 as two examples of the ideal union. Joseph was God’s ideal paradigm. The reason that he was the ideal model is stated in Gen 41:38 – he was filled with the Spirit of God. So, Pharaoh found a woman, in his kingdom, that he believed to be comparable to Joseph. Pharaoh took the daughter of the priest of On and gave her to Joseph to be his wife. Joseph and Asenath had similarities to one another. In Genesis 24, the Bible states that Abraham concluded his life by having his servant take an oath that he would go to his homeland and find a proper wife for Isaac. Abraham wanted to find a wife for Isaac that would be a helper to him. The servant complied with Abraham’s wishes, and found a woman (with God’s guidance), that met the exact specifications that Abraham spelled out in a wife for Isaac. God had to bring the specific woman to the servant in order to become Isaac’s wife. God had a purpose for Isaac and Joseph, and He prepared wives to help them. In the Garden of Eden,
God placed the man to guard and tend it. However, He saw that the man needed a helper. So, He brought the woman to the man. “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). God created man with a purpose; He brought the woman to the man to help the man to fulfill his purpose – this act promotes the ideal union. When God’s people strive to follow God’s ideal, they prosper.

The point of this research was to examine various passages, in the Book of Genesis, to survey the many unions between man and woman which deviated from that ideal situation as pointed out in Gen 2:24. But with the Fall of man detailed in Genesis 3, the breakdown of the ideal union began. While Genesis 2 presents an idyllic environment, Genesis 3 presents a surreal tragedy whose plot is bent upon destroying the idyllic setting.

The events that take place in the first six verses of Genesis 3 become extremely disastrous for everyone. As a consequence of the couple’s sin, the idyllic setting is lost and God’s relationship with man was forever changed. No longer would man convene in the coolness of the Garden with God. The man’s life was made hard and sweaty; the woman’s childbearing was made painful. While in the Garden, their unity with God allowed them to live in the most ideal setting. But, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden because of their disobedience to God’s command. Thus, there seems to be a connectedness in the messages conveyed in Genesis 2 and 3 concerning the ideal, one-flesh union.

The exposure of the man’s and woman’s sin can best be seen with their reaction to their nakedness. In Gen 2:24, the man and woman were naked, but neither one of them were ashamed. But in Gen 3:7: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” Why would their
nakedness have produced so much shame? Sailhamer explains that “their new knowledge” produced the understanding “that they were no longer like each other,” for they were naked and ashamed.\textsuperscript{497} Hamilton adds: “What was formerly understood to be a sign of a healthy relationship between the man and the woman (2:25) has now become something unpleasant and filled with shame.”\textsuperscript{498} The man and the woman were naked and ashamed. Before their disobedience, there was a shameless freedom and unity as one, but their disobedience opened their eyes not only to their nakedness, but to their differences, including a new world of sin, lust, and aberrance.

No longer did the couple feel secure, rather they had a feeling of insecurity for they were naked and ashamed. Before the Fall, they were as one, but afterwards they were two separate, naked individuals. As a result, they attempted to hide their differences by putting aprons on themselves. And, when God began to call for them they made an even more conscious effort to hide. In no way did they want to appear naked before the Lord, the realization of their nakedness exposed their guilt.\textsuperscript{499} Mathews succinctly explains as he writes, “Public nakedness in the ancient Near East and in the Bible was a terrible disgrace. Here that shame is explained as the consequence of the guilt of sin. Before human disobedience there was no shame (2:25), but with sin the man’s self-consciousness has changed. His sense of humiliation impacts his covering up before the woman as well as before God. By this Adam admits his sense of shame, which has been motivated by his guilt.” But, it was not their nakedness that made them most ashamed, 

\textsuperscript{497} Sailhamer, \textit{Genesis}, 52.

\textsuperscript{498} Hamilton, \textit{The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17}, 191.

rather it was their loss of innocence.\textsuperscript{500} Mathews further explains as he notes, “The verb ‘realized,’ when literally rendered ‘knew’ (yd’), echoes the ‘tree of knowledge’ from which they had partaken; the word ‘naked’ is reminiscent again of the ‘crafty’ serpent who tricked the woman into exchanging her innocence for the embarrassing knowledge that they are naked (3:1; 2:25).”\textsuperscript{501}

So, their nakedness was a harsh reminder of what they had lost. What they were ashamed of was they failed to be submissive to the Lord and His principles, and because of their loss of innocence, they attempted to hide. No longer were they as they were before in the Garden – as one. Now they are two separate individuals. Their sin had separated them.

Man continued to deviate from the ideal union beyond the Book of Genesis. But Gen 2:24 as the ideal union, appear to have shaped Moses’ thinking throughout the remainder of the Law. In fact, Gen 2:24 seems to have influenced all three section of the Hebrew Bible – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Thus, Gen 2:24 seems to be behind the instructions in the Law concerning virgins (Ex 22:16–17); bodily discharges (Leviticus 15); sexual morality (Leviticus 18 (incest); Deut 22:13–30); and unfaithfulness of wives (Num 5:11–31). These instructions seem to become directions for how a man and a woman can find the proper mate, and live faithfully with the mate once that mate has been found.

Furthermore, the impact of God’s ideal union is seen in the Prophets. On numerous occasions, Israel was chastised for her unfaithfulness to the Lord (Judg 2:11–23; 8:33; 2 Kgs 17:16; 23:9–10; Is 57:3–10; Jer 2:20; 3:1–13; 13:27; Ezekiel 16 and 23; Hosea 1–3). God created


\textsuperscript{501} Mathews, \textit{Genesis 1–11:26}, 239.
the ideal union for the man and the woman so that they could be a faithful couple and become fruitful and multiply. In the passages listed above, God became angry with Israel as she played the harlot with gods by following after them. According to Gen 2:24, God created the ideal union so that man would learn and live out faithfulness. Originally, God placed the man in the Garden so he could serve the Lord, and guard his relationship with God. The Lord saw that it was not good for the man to be alone. So, He brought the woman to the man to help him in fulfilling his duty. Their duty to one another was to create a unit of solidarity, leaving all behind and cleaving to one another.

In the Book of Judges, lust for a Philistine wife makes Samson pursue a non-Jewish spouse much to the chagrin of his parents. Their concern is realized in the lack of fidelity found in the Philistines; for Samson’s wife was given to his companion by his father-in-law. Hence, Samson killed many Philistines, because his wife was taken from him, and given to another man. Scripture states that if a person is caught in adultery then he shall die (Deut 22:22); for God made a man and a woman to unite for life (Gen 2:24). Samson re-acted in a manner that fulfilled Scripture – he avenged what was rightfully his.

In a similar incident, after the death of Saul, David took Michal, his wife from Paltiel, Michal’s husband to live under his dwelling (2 Sam 3:14–15). It seems strange that David took Michal from her husband. However, Michal was originally David’s wife. Saul, with his hatred toward David, made David leave Michal with her assistance (1 Sam 19:11–19). Perhaps, David took Michal because he wanted to preserve what God originated; for Michal was his wife. God created man to be and have a faithful companion. David wanted to be a man of faithfulness. The reason that Gen 2:24 becomes significant here, is because it implies that faithfulness is lived
between a man and a woman as they work toward becoming one flesh. David had been granted Michal as his wife, therefore, he took her.

In another pericope from the Book of Judges, an unknown Levite had a concubine who was unfaithful; for she played the harlot (Judg 19:2). The Levite went and retrieved her. On their journey home, they stopped in Gibeah. While they were there, the men of the town approached the house where the Levite was, and asked the keeper of the house for the Levite. They wanted the Levite. The man of the house refused to let them have him. Instead, he told them that they could have his daughter; which they refused. Thus, the man of the house gave the Levite’s concubine to the townspeople who raped and killed her. This incident appears to be reminiscent of Gen 19:1–11. In that passage, God destroyed Sodom because of its unfaithfulness. Perhaps, the concubine was destroyed because of her unfaithfulness. As stated before, God initiated the union between a man and a woman to be one flesh union (Gen 2:24). She was killed because of her unfaithfulness.

In 1 Samuel, Elkanah had two wives that desired his attention. One, Peninnah, was able to have children and the other, Hannah, was not. There appears to have been consternation within the house because one wife could have children and the other could not (1 Samuel 1). This occurrence appears to be similar to Gen 29:13–30:24 in that Peninnah and Hannah struggled for the faithful affection of Elkanah much like Leah and Rachel sought after Jacob’s love. According to Gen 2:24, God made a union for a man and a woman; anything outside of those boundaries creates uncertainty. God created the ideal union to bring stability and faithfulness (Gen 2:7–25).
In 1 Samuel 2, Hophni and Phinehas, Eli’s two sons, are exposed as fornicators, for they lay with various women, so God killed them (1 Sam 2:22–25; 4:17–18). Again, this experience is comparable to Er and Onan in that they all practiced sexual aberrance causing God to destroy them for their unfaithfulness. According to Gen 2:22–24, God brought the man and the woman together to make them stronger in being faithful to God, by being faithful to one another.

Saul, David, and Solomon had numerous wives. In fact, the Bible states that David had numerous sons by his different wives. Yet, when David had an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife, and the prophet Nathan rebuked him for it (2 Sam 12:1–15). David took matters into his hands by killing Uriah. As a consequence, Nathan told David that he would suffer heartache for his deed (David’s son Amnon raped Tamar, his half-sister, and Absalom, Tamar’s brother, murders Amnon for his act against his sister. Absalom, later, went into his father, David’s concubines – 2 Sam 16:22). The Bible, also states, that Solomon loved many foreign women, and because of this love his heart turned against the Lord (1 Kgs 11:1–10). Each of these episodes appear illustrative of Jacob and his sons. In all of the cases presented, unfaithfulness seems to be a reoccurring theme. The problem appears to have been that faithfulness was not the initial starting point, and as a result, an ideal conclusion was not obtained. God created man to be faithful to Him. To help him, God formed a woman so that together they could learn to be faithful to each other and to God.

The ideal union is also encouraged within the Writings. One such instance is found in the Book of Ruth. Boaz and Ruth are brought together by some unfortunate circumstances. Boaz and Ruth form a unique relationship that promotes faithfulness to God and one another. This episode
seems to be shaped by Gen 2:24. God brought Ruth to Boaz so that he could care for her, and she could be a faithful helper to him.

In the Book of Ezra, the priests were encouraged to put away their pagan wives. The priest had taken for wives the daughters of Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. The concern was that the “holy seed” had become contaminated because the priests practiced unfaithfulness (Ezra 9:2). Edwin Yamauchi contends, “Marrying those who did not belong to Yahweh was infidelity for the people of Israel, who were considered to be the bride of Yahweh.”

By marrying foreign women, the priests had become unfaithful to God. Ex 34:11–16; Deut 7:1–4 and 20:10–18 forbid the children of Israel to marry the people of Canaan.

God had chosen Israel to be His people. By marrying other peoples, the children of Israel became unfaithful. Gen 2:24 was set as a paradigm that when a man took a woman to be his wife, she was to be a faithful companion. The children of Israel were the bride of God; they were not to marry people from the land of Canaan.

In Proverbs 5 and 7, the ideal union allows the writer to provide marital and sexual instruction for the man; for he is not to chase after harlots or immoral woman. Rather, he is to be faithful in pursuing God’s ideal union. Prov 5:1–7 states,

My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; you do not know them. Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.

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Not to be overly redundant, but it seems that the Writings express that stability comes through faithfulness. The ideal union found in Gen 2:24 is faithfulness, and it is the foundation for all unions between man and woman.

Not only does the ideal union of Gen 2:24 permeate the Hebrew Bible, but it also extends into the New Testament. Jesus taught that God created the ideal union for man (Matt 19:1–10; Mark 10:1–12); and living outside of the ideal was sinful. Paul, also, promotes the ideal union as the manner in which a man and a woman are to live (1 Cor 7:2–5). He states that any type of sexual immorality is a violation of the ideal (1 Cor 6:12–20; 1 Thess 4:2–3; Rms 1:26–27 – homosexuality; 1 Cor 5:1–5 – incest). The New Testament explicitly teaches that the ideal union is commendable, but sexual deviance will be condemned by God. Moreover, Heb 13:4 states, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Gen 2:24 is the ideal union, one-flesh standard set forth by God and examined in this study. Various passages found in the Book of Genesis, expose the aberrant or polluted unions between men and women as they refused to follow the ideal paradigm. While that is a

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504 The usage of “one flesh” as used in Gen 2:24 is not found in the Old Testament. However, it is used in the New Testament. Matt 19:4–6 – “And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?”’ Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” Mark 10:8 – “and the two shall become one flesh; consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh.” 1 Cor 6:16 – “Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” 1 Cor 15:39 – “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.” Eph 5:31 – “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.”

505 Rms 1:26–27 – “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” Heb 13:4 –
profoundly simple idea, sin caused disruption of the ideal. And although sin has abounded throughout the entirety of the Bible and man/woman relationships have faltered in diverse ways and depths because of it; the standard of Gen 2:24 never changed. The standard set forth in Gen 2:24 was the thought behind the marriage laws in the Torah. It was the standard by which the prophets proclaimed judgment against unfaithful Israelites, and the ideal for wise and godly relationships in the Writings.
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