

613 Laws of Torah

Laws 50 – 99

(50)

To leave the forgotten sheaves for the poor (Deut. 24:19-20) (affirmative) (CCI5).

“When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. Let it be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow, so that YHVH your Elohim might bless you in all the work of your hands.

“When you beat your olive trees, do not examine the branch behind you. Let it be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow

(51)

Not to refrain from maintaining a poor man and giving him what he needs (Deut. 15:7) (CCN62).
See Tzedakah: Charity.

7 “When there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, within any of the gates in your land which YHVH your Elohim is giving you, do not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,

This is actually part of the instructions concerning the Sabbatical year: “But you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to Yahovah against you, and it becomes sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing Yahovah your Elohim will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.” (Deuteronomy 15:7-10)
Picture this: you’re an Israelite, the Sabbatical year is close, and your brother needs a loan. Ordinarily, you wouldn’t hesitate, because you’d get your money back. But Yahovah had said, “At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbour shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbour or his brother, because it is called Yahovah’s release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother.”

(Deuteronomy 15:1-3) And you're thinking, if I loan him the money now, I'll never see it again. Here Yahovah is telling us: don't calculate, don't scheme, and don't factor into your plans your beneficiary's inability to repay you. Just meet needs where you find them, according to the resources He has already provided, at home first, and then further afield. After all, it's only money, and Yahovah owns the universe—there's a lot more where that came from.

By the way, the Sabbatical year (as well as Jubilee, a sabbatical of Sabbaths), are prophetic of Yahovah's forgiveness of our debts—something all believers will experience viscerally during the seventh millennium, coming soon.

(52)

To give charity according to one's means (Deut. 15:11) (CCA38). See Tzedakah: Charity.

11 "Because the poor one does not cease from the land. Therefore I am commanding you, saying, 'You shall certainly open your hand to your brother, to your poor and to your needy one, in your land.'

Although the scripture quoted here doesn't really support this particular mitzvah, we've seen the rabbinical principle demonstrated elsewhere in the Torah. The poor were to gather their sustenance from the crop Yahovah had already provided to the landowner. As Yahshua pointed out in His praise of the poor widow who contributed only a couple of pennies to the temple treasury (Luke 21:1-4), her small donation was seen by Yahovah as a fortune. As I said, His math and our math are quite different.

Before leaving this subject, we should address the problem of who, precisely, are the "poor." Who is a legitimate recipient of our charity? Clearly, it isn't just "anybody who thinks they don't have enough." Many rich men fall into that category. And Yahovah's attitude toward those who are poor because they're lazy is clear: "How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man." (Proverbs 6:9-11); "The lazy man will not plow because of winter; he will beg during harvest and have nothing." (Proverbs 20:4) So greed and laziness are deal breakers. This category would presumably include poor people who have nothing because they are living in sin—feeding a drug habit, for example. I don't believe God is asking us to facilitate their addictions. But there are people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in dire straits. The story of Ruth has parallels in today's society. First, Boaz' charity was extended on an individual basis to

someone who had already demonstrated character and loyalty without regard for her own welfare. Second, his aid was bestowed first upon a fellow believer—there was no shortage of poor people in Israel, but Boaz perceived that any aid Ruth received would ultimately honour Yahovah. It's easy and safe for us today to ease our consciences by writing a check to some big charity factory. And it's not necessarily wrong to do that. It's Yahovah's pattern, however, that we get personally involved in people's lives—one on one. Don't worry if you can't write off your income taxes.

Treatment of Gentiles

(53)

To love the stranger (Deut. 10:19) (CCA61). See Love and Brotherhood.

19 "And you shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Mitsrayim.

It's easy to get it right when you say what Yahovah says. This mitzvah, of course, is merely a corollary to "Love your neighbor as yourself." Yahovah lists as reasons for doing this His own authority, power, and justice. Because Yahovah loves the gentiles, His Chosen are to demonstrate that same kind of love. We should not forget why the Israelites ended up as "strangers" in Egypt: it's because Yahovah put them there. He was perfectly capable of keeping the famine from touching Canaan when Jacob and his sons lived there. But He wanted them as a nation to experience all the things that characterize the human race at large—servitude, for we're all slaves to sin at some point; deliverance, for the Messiah died so that we all could live; choice, for we're all faced with the decision of whether or not to seek Yahovah's will. Israel's four hundred years as strangers in Egypt was the first phase of their training to become the people who would deliver the Messiah to the world.

(54)

Not to wrong the stranger in speech (Ex. 22:21) (CCN49). (Note in all the places I looked they all have this one law as Exodus 22:20 when in fact it is verse 21. Always check)

21 "Do not tread down a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Mitsrayim.

The Torah draws a distinction between mistreating and oppressing the strangers living among the Israelites. "Mistreat" here is from the Hebrew Yanah: "to rage or be violent; by implication to suppress, to maltreat, destroy, thrust out by oppression, vex, do violence." (S) The word for "oppress" is lachats: "to press, that is, to distress: to afflict, crush, force, hold fast, oppress, or

thrust.” A whole range of negative attitudes and behaviors is indicated, all of which are taken care of with the observance of Mitzvah #53. Although “wronging strangers in speech” is clearly included, the Torah goes far beyond the mitzvah. Again, the Jews are instructed to remember their former status as slaves in Egypt and apply the golden rule with that in mind.

(55)

Not to wrong the stranger in buying or selling (Ex. 22:21) (CCN50). (Note in all the places I looked they all have this on law as Exodus 22:20 when in fact it is verse 21. Always check)

21 “Do not tread down a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Mitsrayim.

This is based on the same verse as #54; the rabbis are extrapolating again. Being greedy and shrewd in your financial dealings with gentiles -is in direct violation of this mitzvah. He’s speaking specifically to Israel here, telling them that their national job is going to be bearing the signs and means of Yahovah’s deliverance to the rest of the world—to the gentiles—culminating in Yahshua the Messiah. For that reason, they are to treat the “strangers” with the same kindness and sense of purpose with which Yahovah treated them. Yahovah’s salvation, in other words, may be of the Jews (John 4:22), but it’s not exclusively for the Jews: “4 who are Yisra’elites, whose is the adoption, and the esteem, and the covenants, and the giving of the Torah, and the worship, and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, Elohim-blessed forever. Amen.” (Romans 9:4-5).

(56)

Not to intermarry with gentiles (Deut. 7:3) (CCN19). See Interfaith Marriages.

3 “And do not intermarry with them – you do not give your daughter to his son, and you do not take his daughter for your son

And why does Yahovah want them to take these drastic precautions? “For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of Yahovah will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus 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.” (Deuteronomy 7:1-5).

There is a parallel to this in 2 Corinthians. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of Yahovah with idols? For you are the temple of the living Elohim.” (II Corinthians 6:14-16) This applies to any relationship, but especially to marriage. As the “body of Messiah,” believers today are faced with a conundrum similar to the one the Israelites faced—how to live in the world without becoming contaminated by it. We—like they—must be holy, for Yahovah our Elohim is holy.

(57)

To exact the debt of an alien (Deut. 15:3) (affirmative).

3 “Of a foreigner you could require it, but your hand is to release whatever is owed by your brother

“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbour shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbour or his brother, because it is called Yahovah’s release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother....”

(Deuteronomy 15:1-3) Here, they took a feature of the law of the Sabbath-year and turned it into a justification for withholding financial mercy from gentiles. Ignoring the context and the heart of Yahovah, they missed the point entirely. The law of the sabbatical year was a picture of grace. Every seven years, all debts among Hebrews were to be released, as we saw in Mitzvah #51. Debts from foreigners, however, were exempt from this particular amnesty. It’s pretty easy to see what Yahovah is doing here: He’s prophesying that those whose relationship with Him enables them to enjoy his ultimate Sabbath rest will be forgiven their debt of sin. Those who are “foreign” to Him—that is, those who have no relationship with Yahovah—will bear the burden of their debt.

In practice, this mitzvah has no meaning outside of the context of the celebration of the Sabbath year. All lenders who aren’t keeping the other provisions of the Sabbath year (like letting their lands lie fallow and forgiving debts to their brethren) are unjustified in using this as an excuse to be greedy and conniving in their everyday business dealings with gentiles.

(58)

To lend to an alien at interest (Deut. 23:21) According to tradition, this is mandatory (affirmative). (Note this is actually verse 20. Always check your sources.)

20 “To a foreigner you lend at interest, but to your brother you do not lend at interest, so that YHVH your Elohim might bless you in all that you put your hand to in the land which you are entering to possess.

“You shall not charge interest to your brother—interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest. To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that Yahweh your Elohim may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess.” (Deuteronomy 23:19-20) According to rabbinical tradition, charging interest to gentiles is mandatory. The Torah disagrees, although it is certainly permitted. The point of the passage, however, is that Israelites were to be set apart from the world—a family who loved each other and wouldn’t take advantage of each other. Part of that was a prohibition against charging interest on loans to one’s fellow Israelite (see #171).

The whole subject of lending and borrowing, on a national scale, was to be an indicator (one of many) of how well Israel was following Elohim. Moses promised them that if they “diligently obeyed the voice of Yahweh,” He would “open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.” (Deuteronomy 28:12) If they did not, they would “not prosper in [their] ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually.” (Deuteronomy 28:29) The 3500-year history of the Israelite people reveals a sad proportion: a hundred verse-29 curses for every verse-12 blessing. We all need to come to terms with the fact that either Yahweh is a liar or we have not been “diligently obeying the voice of Yahweh our Elohim, to observe carefully all His commandments,”.

Marriage, Divorce and Family

(59)

To honor father and mother (Ex. 20:12) (CCA41).

12 “Respect your father and your mother, so that your days are prolonged upon the soil which YHVH your Elohim is giving you.

Honor your father and mother. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which Yahweh your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12) This is the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue. The case can be made that the Ten Commandments were

listed in order of their importance. If that is true, then this is the most vital of the six that govern relationships between people. The word for “honor” is the Hebrew *kabad*, which at its root means “to be heavy, or to make weighty.” (It’s therefore the opposite of *qalal*. See #3.) We are not to take our relationship with our parents lightly, but rather we are to respect them, hold them in esteem, and take their instructions very seriously. Paul provides the practical application when he simply instructs children to “obey their parents in (or “out of respect for”) Yahweh, for this is right.” (Ephesians 6:1) The Exodus commandment adds the incentive of long life in the Promised Land for those Israelites who comply, something that could be applied equally to individuals or to the nation as a whole.

But there’s more to it. There is a virtually universal perception that God assumes a strictly male persona—a view that often leads to an un-scriptural and erroneous attitude that men are somehow “better” than women. It’s true that Eve’s starring role in the introduction of sin into the world earned her a place of permanent subservience (“Your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Genesis 3:16). But God’s original and intended pattern was equal honor between men and women. As I pointed out in #8, Yahweh is referred to as “father” only once or twice in the Old Covenant Scriptures—most memorably in Isaiah 9:6, where the Messiah is called “Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” We aren’t surprised to find that the name Yahweh is a masculine form in Hebrew. But consider this: the word for “Spirit” (*ruwach*) as used of deity in passages like Genesis 1:2 (“And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters...”) is a feminine noun. Yahweh is not only our Father; “He” is also our Mother! The reason God designed us as He did—children of both our mothers and our fathers—was to demonstrate a spiritual truth: in order to be truly alive, we need to be born not only in body and soul, but also in spirit. Yahshua pointed out this very thing to Nicodemus in the third chapter of the Gospel of John.

So when Yahweh inscribes with His own hand on tablets of stone that we are to “honor our fathers and our mothers,” He is speaking of something far more significant than respecting and obeying our earthly parents (though we are certainly to do that). He is teaching us about the relationship He wants to have with us. He is our Father and our Mother—ultimately, it is He whom we are to honor (i.e., be serious about, give weight to). Yahweh our “Father” is our Creator, our Protector, our Savior. Yahweh our “Mother” is our Comforter, our “Helper,” the One who restrains evil in the world—the “maternal” aspects of deity. The attendant promise “that your days may be long upon the land which Yahweh your God is giving you” is thus clearly a reference to the eternal life that we who honor Yahweh will enjoy. As we explore these 613 mitzvot, we will discover that the same sort of spiritual truths will underlie each of the “ten commandments,” and indeed, the entire Torah.

This is why Mother's Day undermines the 5th commandment to honor both Mother and Father, and not just one alone.

(60)

Not to smite a father or a mother (Ex. 21:15) (CCN44).

15 "And he who smites his father or his mother shall certainly be put to death.

Do not smite one's father or mother. "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 21:15) If the honor due one's father and mother is based, as we saw in #59, on the honor of Yahweh Himself, then to strike one's parent is tantamount to striking God, because our parents stand in for God on this earth. The word for "smite" or "strike" implies the intention to inflict harm. Nakah means "to strike (lightly or severely, literally or figuratively), to beat, wound, kill, slaughter, murder, punish, or slay." (S) I can't help but cringe when I think of those who beat Yahshua, spat on Him, and nailed Him to the tree. In a very real sense, they were "striking their father and mother," and are thus worthy of death. But if we rebuff Yahweh's Holy Spirit, we are no less guilty.

As far as the mitzvah's prescribed temporal punishment is concerned, it should be understood that the death sentence for striking your earthly father or mother was reserved for Israel under its theocratic government. We today are not to exact this penalty. But Yahweh's word is not obsolete: he who strikes out at the God who is represented in this life by his parents "shall surely be put to death." There's no getting around it.

(61)

Not to curse a father or mother (Ex. 21:17) (CCN46).

17 "And he who curses his father or his mother shall certainly be put to death.

Do not curse your father or mother. "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 21:17) This is even harsher than it looks at first glance in the English. The word for "curse" is one we've seen before—qalal: to trivialize, to bring into contempt, curse, despise, or revile. (See #3.) Admittedly, the death penalty seems a bit extreme for merely taking your parents lightly. But as we have seen, our mothers and fathers stand in the place of Yahweh on this earth. Ultimately, if we take God lightly, we shall "bear our sin." Aside from the metaphor of father and mother representing God, keeping the parent-child relationship intact in Israel during the years between the exodus and the coming of the Messiah was a crucial factor in delivering our Deliverer to a lost world. Sending the promised Messiah into a dysfunctional

society the likes of the Canaanites', the Babylonians', the Romans', or today's America for that matter, would have been, shall we say, problematical.

Yahshua once referred to this very passage: "Jesus replied, 'Why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, God says, "Honor your father and mother," and "Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death." But you say, "You don't need to honor your parents by caring for their needs if you give the money to God instead." And so, by your own tradition, you nullify the direct commandment of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah was prophesying about you when he said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce, for they replace God's commands with their own man-made teachings.'" (Matthew 15:3-9 NLT) The "direct commandment" taught us about the relationship between God and man.

(62)

To reverently fear father and mother (Lev. 19:3) (CCA42).

3 'Each one of you should fear his mother and his father, and guard My Sabbaths. I am YHVH your Elohim.

Reverently fear your father and mother. "Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: "You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh, your God, am holy. Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am Yahweh your God.'" (Leviticus 19:1-3) As if to confirm everything I've said in the last few entries, Moses now reports Yahweh's instructions to "revere" one's mother and father in the larger context of reverence for Him and separation from the world. The reference to "mother and father" here is in fact a bit incongruous if taken strictly as the earthly relationship between parents and children. But if you "read" it: "You shall revere Me and keep My Sabbaths," it all makes perfect sense. Yahweh is our Father, our Mother, our reason for being, the One whose love brought us into existence. And again, it makes little sense to link reverence for our earthly fathers and mothers to the weekly Sabbath rest, but if you see that Yahweh is equating the Sabbath to our eternal salvation as He is identifying our parents with Himself, the picture becomes clear and stunningly beautiful: those who are holy—separated to Yahweh's will and purpose—are children of their Heavenly Father/Mother, and it is these who will "keep His Sabbaths"—in other words, enjoy everlasting life. Why? Because Yahweh is their God.

(63)

To be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28) (CCA43).

28 And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said to them, "Bear fruit and increase, and fill the

earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over all creatures moving on the earth.”

Be fruitful and multiply. “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” (Genesis 1:28) First, notice that when God created “man” in His own image, He created both male and female, i.e., both were made in the image of God. Men like Muhammad who treat women like cattle—as sub-human possessions—must answer to Yahweh for their disrespect. Second, notice that the “command” to be fruitful and multiply was a blessing—the ability to do this was the result of Yahweh’s love and goodness toward us. In fact, one of the implied consequences of Israel’s obedience was to be that their numbers would increase: “If you diligently obey the voice of Yahweh your God...[He] will set you high above all nations of the earth.... Blessed shall be the fruit of your body.” (Deuteronomy 28:1-4) The converse, however, is equally true: “If you do not obey the voice of Yahweh...cursed shall be the fruit of your body.... You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.... You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and daughters whom Yahweh your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you.” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 18, 41, 53) How ironic it is that our unwillingness to heed the voice of Yahweh will result in our inability to obey Him.

This mitzvah also flies in the face of the odd Victorian attitude that sex is somehow dirty or profane in itself—that its bliss is inherently sinful and those who enjoy it should feel guilt-ridden and embarrassed, and that sex is strictly for procreation, not pleasure. Within the context of marriage (which Yahweh Himself instituted) the godly order was: “A man shall...be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Genesis 2:24-25) Let’s face it: the Creator made the process pleasurable so we would “be fruitful and multiply.” That being said, it’s not the sex itself that’s holy, but the marriage bed—the context of pleasure through relationship. It’s a metaphor for our eternal relationship with God. That’s why Satan tries so hard to break down the bonds of family relationship, using sex, ironically enough, as a primary tool.

(64)

That a eunuch shall not marry a daughter of Israel (Deut. 23:2) (CCN136). (note this should be verse 1 and not 2. Always check)

1 “No one wounded, crushed or whose member is cut off does enter the assembly of YHVH.

A eunuch shall not marry a daughter of Israel. "He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh." (Deuteronomy 23:1) The mitzvah here bears no resemblance to what Yahweh said. The rabbis simply took the ball (so to speak) and ran with it. This has nothing to do with marriage or family, and everything to do with symbols. It's not that God is somehow put off by those unfortunate enough to have become eunuchs; it's that these poor guys were a ready metaphor for fruitlessness. Yahweh is teaching us that "entering into His assembly" in truth will be evidenced by spiritual "fruit" in one's life, defined later by Paul as love (hence: joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—Galatians 5:22). Just as a physical eunuch is not equipped to father children, a "spiritual eunuch" is inherently unable to transmit the spirit of God's love to those around him.

Does the Torah here unfairly condemn (as it seems to) the one who has been emasculated to an eternity separated from Yahweh? In a word, no. There are at least two examples of eunuchs in the Bible who were obviously true worshipers of Yahweh—Daniel (see 1:3) and the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8. So is this a scriptural contradiction? Not if you take the Torah's directive in the spirit in which it was obviously meant. The prophet Isaiah clears the whole mess up for us: "Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh speak, saying, 'Yahweh has utterly separated me from His people'; nor let the eunuch say, 'Here I am, a dry tree.' For thus says Yahweh: 'To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.'" (Isaiah 56:3-5)

(65)

That a mamzer shall not marry the daughter of a Jew (Deut. 23:3) (CCN137). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children. (Note this should be Deut 23:2 always check your sources.)
2 "No one of illegitimate birth does enter the assembly of YHVH, even a tenth generation of his does not enter the assembly of YHVH.

Isn't this strange. Here we are reading about the Book of Ruth and law number 65 tells us we are not to marry a mamzer, that is one who by birth comes from an illegitimate relationship. And this why we see in the very next verse and the next law #66 the mention of Ammon and Moab who are born to Lot by relations with His daughters.

A mamzer shall not marry the daughter of a Jew. "One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of Yahweh." (Deuteronomy 23:2) As we shall see in the next section ("Forbidden Sexual Relations"), a man may not marry certain close blood relatives, the ex-wives of certain close blood relatives, a woman who has not been validly divorced from her previous husband,

the daughter or sister of his ex-wife, etc. The progeny of such forbidden relationships are known as mamzerim—those of “illegitimate birth.” The Talmud, strangely enough, does not include people merely born out of wedlock in this technically “illegitimate” group, but only the children of these specifically forbidden relationships. The Torah doesn’t elaborate. Strong’s defines the Hebrew word for “one of illegitimate birth” (mamzer) as being derived from the root word for “to alienate; a mongrel, that is, born of a Jewish father and a heathen mother—a bastard,” so apparently we have a difference of opinion as to precisely what a mamzer was.

As in the case of eunuchs (see #64), Yahweh is not arbitrarily condemning a group of people who had no control over their familial situation. Rather, He is instituting a symbol, a picture, of the necessary state of being set apart for Yahweh’s use. “Bastards” in this context represent the fruit, or result, of sin. The metaphor demonstrates that the ends do not justify the means in God’s economy—the “Assembly of Yahweh” cannot be populated through corrupt methods or impure motives, but only through a “legitimate” relationship with Yahweh. Thus when Constantine’s Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) de facto “converted” all of the Roman Empire to “Christianity,” it was a pointless and counterproductive tactic. When you baptize a pagan, all you get is a wet pagan.

(66)

That an Ammonite or Moabite shall never marry the daughter of an Israelite (Deut. 23:4) (negative). (note this Deut 23:3. Always check your sources)

“An Ammonite or Mo’abite does not enter the assembly of YHVH, even a tenth generation of them does not ever enter the assembly of YHVH, 4 because they did not meet you with bread and water on the way when you came out of Mitsrayim, and because they hired against you Balaam son of Be’or from Pethor of Aram Naharayim, to curse you.

An Ammonite or Moabite shall never marry the daughter of an Israelite. “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of Yahweh forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. Nevertheless Yahweh your God would not listen to Balaam, but Yahweh your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because Yahweh your God loves you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.” (Deuteronomy 23:3-6) Once again, we see the rabbis equating “entering the assembly of Yahweh” with marriage to a Jew. If it wasn’t clear before, it should be now: marriage has next to nothing to do with what He was really trying to help us understand. Here, I believe, the metaphor is a warning against compromise and accommodation with unbelievers—

even if they're our neighbors or relatives—if those unbelievers are actively attempting to lead us astray.

Moab and Ammon (bordering Israel's Promised Land on the east) were the descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. But by the time of the exodus, they had become so thoroughly pagan that their hostility to Yahweh's people was guaranteed. The "Balaam episode" (Numbers 22-25) became the universal Biblical metaphor for false teaching leading to destruction (cf. Revelation 2:14). So here God tells His people not to have anything to do with them—do not allow their religion, their culture, their political presence, their commerce, and yes, even their bloodline, to have any part in the life of Israel—ever. (In an ironic twist that proves that the underlying symbol outweighs the plain reading of the mitzvah, Yahweh arranged for a godly Moabite woman, Ruth, to show up in the Messiah's family tree—she was the great grandmother of King David. In Ruth's case, of course, it was clear that she had turned her back on Moab and its gods in favor of Israel and Yahweh—Ruth 1:16) God's instruction is to maintain our holiness, our separation from the world's influence. As usual, Yahweh's clear intention goes far beyond the face value of the mitzvah.

(67)

Not to exclude a descendant of Esau from the community of Israel for three generations (Deut. 23:8-9) (negative).

7 "Do not loathe an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not loathe a Mitsrite, because you were a stranger in his land. 8 "The children of the third generation born to them do enter the assembly of YHVH.

Do not exclude a descendant of Esau from the community of Israel for three generations. "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.... The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of Yahweh." (Deuteronomy 23:7-8) The devil, they say, is in the details. Edom, the descendants of Esau (brother of Jacob/Israel) had also become implacable enemies of Yahweh's people by the time of the exodus, refusing to allow the Israelites to cross their land (Numbers 20:18-21). So why does the Torah cut them so much slack? Yes, Israel was instructed to be wary of them, but after three generations of cohabitation with Jews, Edomites who worshipped Yahweh (unlike Moabites or Ammonites) could be admitted to "the assembly of Yahweh." What's the difference? It all goes back to Balaam: the Edomites as a nation may have been generally hostile to the Jews, but they never attempted to seduce them away from Yahweh. Remember what I said (#3) about trivializing Yahweh's name versus blaspheming it—qalal vs. naqab? The same distinction appears here: bad behavior is one thing; false teaching is infinitely worse in Yahweh's estimation. It's worth noting that in the end, Edom

will be utterly wiped out because of its sins (Jeremiah 49:10). But between Moses and Judgment Day, Yahweh always left the door of repentance open to them.

(68)

Not to exclude an Egyptian from the community of Israel for three generations (Deut. 23:8-9) (negative).

7 “Do not loathe an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not loathe a Mitsrite, because you were a stranger in his land. 8 “The children of the third generation born to them do enter the assembly of YHVH.

Do not exclude an Egyptian from the community of Israel for three generations. “You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of Yahweh.” (Deuteronomy 23:7-8) Same song, second verse. Unlike Moab and Ammon, Egypt’s crimes against Israel and its God were not those of false teaching and seduction, but rather of lost men behaving badly—something that’s (let’s face it) inevitable for lost men. So Yahweh offered to consider their repentance (though there’s no evidence that they ever did, at least on the national level). Egypt is a common scriptural metaphor for the world: not particularly good or bad, just there—a place of routine, mediocrity, malaise, and finally slavery. It’s the place we must leave in order to enter the “Promised Land” of Yahweh’s salvation. Unlike Edom, a remnant of Egypt will “make it” into the Millennium (see Isaiah 19:23-24), serving Yahweh with Israel at her side. The children of Egypt’s third generation (following paganism and Islam) will indeed “enter the assembly of Yahweh.”

(69)

That there shall be no harlot (in Israel); that is, that there shall be no intercourse with a woman, without previous marriage with a deed of marriage and formal declaration of marriage (Deut. 23:18) (CCN133). See Marriage.

17 “None of the daughters of Yisra’el is to be a cult prostitute, nor any of the sons of Yisra’el be a cult prostitute. 18 “Do not bring the gift of a whore or the pay of a dog to the House of YHVH your Elohim for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to YHVH your Elohim. There shall be no harlot in Israel; that is, there shall be no intercourse with a woman without a formal declaration of marriage. “There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a

dog to the house of Yahweh your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to Yahweh your God.” (Deuteronomy 23:17-18) The rabbis have missed the point entirely (although what they prescribed is no doubt a fine thing). By making us the way He did—males and females designed to mate for life and produce offspring as a byproduct of our love for each other—Yahweh is showing us something wonderful about the spiritual pattern He has designed for us. He pictures Israel as His wife and He is her “husband.” The essence of our marital faithfulness is monogamy—restricting our sexual contact to one partner. This is a picture of our faithfulness to Yahweh. We are not to “cheat” on Him by giving our affections to false gods—even stealthy idols like wealth, pleasure, or pride.

There is, however, a more prosaic application of this mitzvah. When Moses wrote these words, the Canaanites whom Israel was to displace practiced a licentious religion that included temple prostitution—both male and female—as part of its rites. Thus if an Israelite (either male or female—the passage specifies both) were to become a purveyor of pagan worship by becoming a ritual prostitute, it would be the antithesis of faithfulness to Yahweh—an abomination. As we have seen before and will see again, this is simply a call to holiness—being set apart as Yahweh’s people.

The Deuteronomy passage also makes another point: a harlot’s wages weren’t acceptable as offerings before Yahweh. In other words, the ends do not justify the means. We are called to holiness in ministry, not productivity, efficiency, or success. God does not need venture capital from Satan.

(70)

To take a wife by kiddushin, the sacrament of marriage (Deut. 24:1) (CCA44). See The Process of Marriage: Kiddushin and Nisuin.

1 “When a man takes a wife and shall marry her, then it shall be, if she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found a matter of uncoveredness in her, and he shall write her a certificate of divorce, and put it in her hand, and send her out of his house,

Take a wife by kiddushin, the sacrament of marriage. “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his

house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before Yahweh, and you shall not bring sin on the land which Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance." (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

God gave us lots of information on whom to marry, but He had precious little to say about how. In Jewish tradition, marriage is a two-step process. Kiddushin, or betrothal, is in effect from the time the bride accepts a bridal contract, money, or even sexual relations from the groom. It is far more binding than our modern "engagement," and can only be dissolved by death or formal divorce. The final step to full-blown "marriage," called nisuin, is achieved when the bride moves in with the groom. There is nothing at all wrong with this system, but the scripture the rabbis use to support it has nothing to do with the marriage/wedding process. As a matter of fact, Yahweh never actually specified a particular wedding formula (except for the obvious—one man and one woman sharing a life together—becoming "one flesh"). The Deuteronomy passage is, rather, a discussion about divorce and an admonition against certain abuses of the practice (which we'll cover shortly).

At first glance, Yahweh seems resigned to, even comfortable with, the fact of divorce here, but how does He really feel? "You cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because Yahweh has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For Yahweh, the God of Israel, says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence, says Yahweh of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." (Malachi 2:13-16) Marriage is a picture of our relationship with Yahweh. So breaking our marriage vows is like betraying our God—it tears down a relationship that was meant to endure for life. Yahweh is merciful and forgiving, but we can't destroy what He has built and expect Him to be happy about it.

(71)

That the newly married husband shall (be free) for one year to rejoice with his wife (Deut. 24:5) (affirmative).

5 “When a man has taken a new wife, let him not go out into the army nor let any matter be imposed upon him. He shall be exempt one year for the sake of his home, to rejoice with his wife whom he has taken.

The newly married husband shall be free for one year to rejoice with his wife. “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” (Deuteronomy 24:5) Boy, does our Maker know us or what? Here Yahweh honors the institution of the honeymoon, that magical time when the bride and groom can’t get enough of each other. The newlywed husband is not to be separated from His bride for a whole year—there will be no military service or other duties that would put distance or stress between the happy couple. This doesn’t mean that the husband can’t go to work to support his family for a whole year, only that he won’t be separated from his bride during that time. Only when they have become thoroughly familiar with each other, when they have had ample time to explore every nook and cranny of each other’s personalities, psyches, and anatomies, does God say, “Okay, now you two could use a little space.”

(72)

That a bridegroom shall be exempt for a whole year from taking part in any public labor, such as military service, guarding the wall and similar duties (Deut. 24:5) (negative).

5 “When a man has taken a new wife, let him not go out into the army nor let any matter be imposed upon him. He shall be exempt one year for the sake of his home, to rejoice with his wife whom he has taken.

A bridegroom shall be exempt for a whole year from taking part in any public labor, such as military service, guarding the wall and similar duties. “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” (Deuteronomy 24:5) This, of course, is simply the converse of Mitzvah #71. (The rabbis felt compelled to come up with a certain number of positive and negative rules, which explains why the list seems so contrived in places.) Consider this: if marriage is a picture of Yahweh’s relationship with His people, then there ought to be a spiritual counterpart to this honeymoon period—and there is. Yahshua the Messiah is prophesied to reign on earth as King of Kings for a thousand years—a period of time generally referred to as the Millennium, actually the seventh of seven millennia Yahweh has ordained as mortal man’s time upon the earth. Following the “marriage supper of the Lamb,” spoken of in Revelation 19, God’s thousand-year-long honeymoon with the redeemed of the earth will usher

in the wedded bliss of eternity with Him. As a confirmed “old married person,” that sounds pretty good to me.

(73)

Not to withhold food, clothing or conjugal rights from a wife (Ex. 21:10) (CCN42). See The Marital Relationship.

10 “If he takes another wife, her food, her covering, and her marriage rights are not to be diminished.

Do not withhold food, clothing or conjugal rights from your wife. “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.” (Exodus 21:10-11) What the rabbis said to do here was such a no-brainer, God never even mentioned it. What He did say was intended to protect subsequent wives from abuse. It is abundantly clear that Yahweh’s intended pattern for marriage was two people, a man and a woman, joined as one for a lifetime. However, strange as we may find it, He never overtly prohibited polygamy—although He made sure that every time we see it in practice in the scriptures, there’s trouble attached.

Caveat emptor.

(74)

That the woman suspected of adultery shall be dealt with as prescribed in the Torah (Num. 5:30) (affirmative).

30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife. Then he shall make the woman stand before YHVH, and the priest shall do to her all this Torah.

The woman suspected of adultery shall be dealt with as prescribed in the Torah. “This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband’s authority, goes astray and defiles herself, or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before Yahweh, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her. Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt.” (Numbers 5:29-31) The “this” at the beginning of the quoted scripture refers to a lengthy passage that immediately precedes it (Numbers 5:11-28) in which if a husband suspects his wife of cheating on him but has no proof, he is to bring her before the priest, who turns the whole thing over to Yahweh. If she denies wrongdoing, a complicated ritual is performed which is the rough equivalent of saying, “Cross my heart and hope to die,” only for real, because Yahweh’s doing the judging. As

a practical matter, this convoluted procedure protects both the husband and the wife from injustice: if the wife is innocent, she can't be condemned on the suspicions of a jealous and paranoid husband. But if she is guilty, her own words condemn her before God, leaving the husband "free from iniquity."

This "Law of Jealousy" demonstrated the spiritual adultery of Israel. Yahweh describes himself as a "jealous God." He refuses to share our affections with other "gods," whether serious idols or frivolous pursuits. If we are guilty of unfaithfulness toward Him, it will do us no good to deny it, swearing our innocence on the proverbial "stack of Bibles," for He knows the truth even before we do. The only thing we can do is to fall on His mercy, repent, and beg His forgiveness. Unfaithful Israel has not done this—yet. But they will, and a remnant of them will be restored to a place of honour.

(75)

That one who defames his wife's honor (by falsely accusing her of unchastity before marriage) must live with her all his lifetime (Deut. 22:19) (affirmative).

19 and fine him one hundred pieces of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought an evil name on a maiden of Yisra'el. And she is to be his wife, he is not allowed to put her away all his days.

One who defames his wife's honor by falsely accusing her of unchastity before marriage must live with her all his lifetime. "If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin,' then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter was not a virgin," and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. (Deuteronomy 22:13-19) The actual passage is pretty self-explanatory. In our decadent culture, of course, the first hurdle we have to get over is the idea of pre-marital sexual abstinence. It's not quaint and outmoded; rather, it's God's plan for our lives. Why? Because (as I've said before) the marriage of a man and a woman is a metaphor for Yahweh's relationship with His

people. He won't share our affections with false gods—He wants His bride pure and spotless, undefiled by compromise with the world.

That leaves us in a bit of a pickle, doesn't it? All of us have sinned and therefore fall short of the glory of God. None of us are "spotless bride" material. It requires a miracle of love, redemption, and sacrifice, but if we'll let Him, He will restore our purity and take us as His bride.

(76)

That a man may not divorce his wife concerning whom he has published an evil report (about her unchastity before marriage) (Deut. 22:19) (negative).

19 and fine him one hundred pieces of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought an evil name on a maiden of Yisra'el. And she is to be his wife, he is not allowed to put her away all his days.

A man may not divorce his wife concerning whom he has published an evil report about her unchastity before marriage. "...He cannot divorce her all his days." (Deuteronomy 22:19) This is one more contrived rabbinical restatement designed to let them arrive at the requisite number of affirmative and negative mitzvot. They missed (okay, they purposely ignored) a golden opportunity here, however. The Deuteronomy passage quoted in #75 goes on to state the consequences if the bride is guilty: "But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you." (Deuteronomy 22:20-21) A man who accused his bride of unchastity in Israel, in other words, had to be prepared to either live with her all his life or see her stoned to death. In other words, one did not make such accusations lightly. A truly loving husband, it seems to me, would rather cover his bride's failings, forgiving her of her past sins, than see her stoned to death. In fact, this compassionate attitude is exactly how Yahweh treats us if we ask Him for mercy. If we do not, however, we must face judgment.

This spiritual application rings true for Israel, unfortunately. She was unchaste. She did—and continues to—follow false gods. And the "men of her city" (i.e., the world) have in obedience to the Law been stoning her for thousands of years. If only Israel had understood what Yahweh was teaching them in His Torah.

(77)

To divorce by a formal written document (Deut. 24:1) (affirmative). See The Process of Obtaining a Divorce.

1 “When a man takes a wife and shall marry her, then it shall be, if she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found a matter of uncoveredness in her, and he shall write her a certificate of divorce, and put it in her hand, and send her out of his house,

Obtain a divorce by a formal written document. “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before Yahweh, and you shall not bring sin on the land which Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) The rabbis are honing in here on the mechanism for divorce. It should be reiterated right up front that although Yahweh allows it, He hates divorce, permitting it only because of the hardness of Israel’s heart (Matthew 19:8). Judaism 101 explains the Certificate of Divorce: “The document in question is referred to in the Talmud as a *sefer k’ritut* (scroll of cutting off), but it is more commonly known today as a ‘get.’ The get is not phrased in negative terms. The traditional text does not emphasize the breakdown of the relationship, nor does it specify the reason for the divorce; rather, it states that the woman is now free to marry another man.” Sad, isn’t it? The relationship—the thing symbolized by marriage—is arguably the only thing Yahweh cares about. And yet we often throw it away without a second thought.

Yahshua put the issue into perspective for us. “Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: ‘Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for any reason?’ ‘Haven’t you read the Scriptures?’ Jesus replied. ‘They record that from the beginning “God made them male and female.” And He said, “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together.’ ‘Then why did Moses say a man could merely write an official letter of divorce and send her away?’ they asked. Jesus replied, “Moses permitted divorce as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness, but it was not what God had originally intended. And I tell you this, a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.” (Matthew 19:3-8 NLT; cf. Mark 10:212) We mess up God’s metaphors all too often through sheer thick-headedness. But to my mind it’s

worse to do it through stubborn, willful disobedience of His instructions. He didn't tell us these things for His health; He told us for our health.

In identifying the only legitimate cause for divorce, Yahshua pinpointed the very thing that caused Yahweh to separate Himself from Israel: unfaithfulness. "You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a letter of divorce.' But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." (Matthew 5:31-32 NLT)

(78)

That one who divorced his wife shall not remarry her, if after the divorce she had been married to another man (Deut. 24:4) (CCN134). See Divorce.

4 then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled, for that would be an abomination before YHVH. And do not bring sin on the land which YHVH your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.

One who divorced his wife shall not remarry her if after the divorce she had been married to another man. "...Then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled." (Deuteronomy 24:4) From the same passage as #77 above, we see a restriction placed on the husband of the broken marriage: he is not to remarry the wife he previously divorced if she had been married to someone else in the meantime. This is where it gets a little confusing. The book of Hosea, especially the second chapter, seems at first to imply that Yahweh has different standards for Himself. In verse 2 He says, "She [Israel] is not my wife, nor am I her husband." Israel, after unsuccessfully seeking other "lovers," says in verse 7, "I will go and return to my first husband." But then down in verse 16, we read, "It shall be in that day, says Yahweh, that you will call me 'my Husband.'" And in verse 19, "I will betroth you to Me forever." What gives? Is Yahweh breaking His own rules? He would be, except for one stunning detail: "From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." (II Corinthians 5:16-19) The Israel to whom Yahweh will betroth Himself in the Last Days is not His old unfaithful wife, for she is prohibited by law from remarrying her old Husband. Rather, she is now a new creation that, has been made pure and undefiled by the

blood of the Lamb of God. But until she is transformed in Spirit by receiving Yahshua, her renewed relationship with God is legally impossible.

(79)

That a widow whose husband died childless must not be married to anyone but her deceased husband's brother (Deut. 25:5) (CCN135) (this is only in effect insofar as it requires the procedure of release below).

A widow whose husband died childless must not be married to anyone but her deceased husband's brother. "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." (Deuteronomy 25:5-6) In ancient Israel, this mitzvah was part of the welfare system, intimate and practical, as usual. To become a widow was bad enough, but to be left with no sons to carry on the family name and provide familial support was considered a catastrophic tragedy. The widow wasn't to remarry just anybody. God's ideal solution was for the dead husband's brother to marry the widow (even if he was already married, so the rules governing polygamy apply—see #73). The first son born of this union of necessity would bear the name, status, and inheritance rights of the deceased husband. This also kept the DNA—the genetic profile—of the son as close as possible to what it would have been had the dead brother been his actual father.

There were several big "ifs" attached to this mitzvah, however. First, the brothers had to have dwelled "together" with each other before the first died. Yachad comes from a word that means "unit." It's not specified just how close this togetherness had to be, but if the guy never saw his brother except at gatherings like the Feast of Tabernacles, all bets were apparently off. Second, there was a "get-out-of-marriage-free card," so to speak. We'll address that under #81.

(80)

To marry the widow of a brother who has died childless (Deut. 25:5) (this is only in effect insofar as it requires the procedure of release below) (CCA45).

One must marry the widow of a brother who has died childless. "...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." (Deuteronomy 25:5) The scripture supporting the affirmatively stated converse to Mitzvah #79 stresses that the widow was not to be looked at as a charity case, but was to be a full-fledged

member of the family with all the rights and privileges of any wife, including conjugal rights. The primary idea, after all, was to ensure that the dead brother's line continued. This whole "marry-your-brother's-widow" concept was not new with the Law of Moses, by the way. God took this issue of genetic heritage very seriously generations before the exodus: consider the case of Judah's son Onan in Genesis 38. Yahweh killed him (verse 10) for refusing to father a son for his dead brother Er. It's a pretty convoluted tale, but the bloodline of the Messiah was at stake here. Judah himself unwittingly ended up fathering his own grandson (i.e., the son of his daughter-in-law), Perez (a direct ancestor of King David). Twisted but true.

(81)

That the widow formally release the brother-in-law (if he refuses to marry her) (Deut. 25:79) (CCA46).

The widow (as in #79 and 80) must formally release the brother-in-law if he refuses to marry her. "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.'"

(Deuteronomy 25:7-10) Okay, so it's not a stoning offense. This puts the "marry-your-brother's widow" rule in the "strongly suggested" category. Notice that three times in the greater passage, the phrase "in Israel" or "of Israel" is used. This is a strong indication that the mitzvah was never intended to apply outside Eretz Israel, or beyond the time frame of the theocratic assembly (which admittedly was designed to last more or less forever). This is one of those "Laws" that can't possibly be kept today (if only because modern Israel forbids polygamy). If keeping the letter of the whole Law was what justified us with Yahweh, we'd all be in deep spit.

Forbidden Sexual Relations

(82)

Not to indulge in familiarities with relatives, such as kissing, embracing, winking, skipping, which may lead to incest (Lev. 18:6) (CCN110).

Do not indulge in familiarities with relatives, such as kissing, embracing, winking, or skipping, which may lead to incest. “None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am Yahweh.” (Leviticus 18:6) This verse does not, as the rabbis suggest, prohibit specific ostensibly innocent activities that could be preludes to sexual sin.

Rather, it introduces and summarizes an entire category of taboo relationships listed in Leviticus 18. In this whole next section, then, we will explore these specific forbidden relationships one at a time. One thing we should make clear at the outset: to “uncover one’s nakedness” is an unambiguous Hebrew euphemism for sexual relations—it does not merely mean to strip (or skip, for that matter). However, the use of the word “approach” (Hebrew qarab: to come near, approach, bring forth) signals that not only is the actual act forbidden, but also the intent—read: “Don’t attempt to seduce them.” This of course meshes perfectly with what Yahshua had to say in Matthew 5:28—to look at a woman with lust is tantamount to committing adultery with her. God looks at the heart.

We should not skip over the admonition that punctuates this summary verse: “I am Yahweh.” This oft-repeated formula is the reason given for all the detailed instruction on sexual purity that would follow. It’s a reminder that Yahweh created a certain order to things: one man and one woman becoming one flesh, metaphorically in their life together, and literally in the procreation of offspring through physical union driven by mutual love. This is a picture, of course, of our relationship with God. When we are “born from above” or “born of the Spirit,” we become the spiritual offspring of our Heavenly Father, Yahweh, and our “Mother,” the Holy Spirit (remember, the word for Spirit, ruwach, is a feminine noun in Hebrew). This makes us Christ’s adopted brothers and sisters! Yahshua said, “For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” (Mark 3:35) And that’s why Paul could write, “We are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:16-17) If we indulge in sexual relationships that violate the divine metaphor, we have defaced the priceless masterpiece Yahweh has created, like scribbling a moustache on the Mona Lisa.

(83)

Not to commit incest with one’s mother (Lev. 18:7) (CCN112). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

Do not commit incest with your mother. “The nakedness of your...mother you shall not uncover. She is your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness.” (Leviticus 18:7) On a human level, I find it hard to believe that instruction on this matter was even deemed necessary. Could the whole Oedipus thing have been such a big problem in ancient Israel that it had to be singled out for condemnation? Probably not, although it might have been in Canaan. We must remember

the family metaphor Yahweh is employing here: to commit incest with one's mother is to usurp the place of your father—thus it is tantamount to seizing the authority of Yahweh.

(84)

Not to commit sodomy with one's father (Lev. 18:7) (CCN111).

Do not commit sodomy with your father. "The nakedness of your father...you shall not uncover." (Leviticus 18:7) Though the rabbis have taken the usual stance that the mitzvot are written to an exclusively male audience, there's no reason to suppose that this prohibition applied exclusively to sons: all sexual relations between parents and children are forbidden by the Torah. Frankly, it's shocking to consider that mentioning the possibility was even found necessary. But again, the family metaphor is being brought into play: to have sex with one's father was to steal the place of one's mother: it's a picture of usurping the role of the Holy Spirit.

As an aside, there's an incident recorded in Genesis 9:20-24 that may well be foundational for this mitzvah. Sometime after the flood, Noah planted a vineyard, made some wine, got drunk, and passed out butt-naked in his tent. His younger son Ham, the record says, "saw" his father in this state. The Hebrew word for "saw" is ra'ah, which implies more than a fleeting glance. It means "to behold, consider, enjoy, gaze..." Also, the same words for "uncover" and

"nakedness" we find so often in Leviticus 18 are used here, and as B&C point out, when used together they imply sexual relations. Could it be that Ham did more to his father Noah than our English translations actually report? After all, verse 24 says, "So Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his younger son had done to him." The result was a curse on the house of Ham through his youngest son, Canaan. The point of all this is that the father (because he represents Yahweh in the family structure) is to receive reverence and respect at all times from all his children.

You will also note that the city of Sodom was also listed as one of the cities of Canaan. It is from this word that we get the word sodomy. The word "sodomized" comes from the word "sodomy", which in its turn comes from the word "Sodom", which is the name of an ancient city in Palestine. According to the Book of Genesis 19:24, the city of Sodom was destroyed together with all its population for the sins of its people. There are also a number of references to this event in the Qur'an. <http://www.truth-and-justice.info/sodomy.html>

(85)

Not to commit incest with one's father's wife (Lev. 18:8) (CCN113). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

Do not commit incest with your father's wife. "The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it is your father's nakedness." (Leviticus 18:8) Incest with your mother was covered in #83, so this mitzvah, it seems, is expanding and refining the rule to include other wives your father may have married, either as a widower or in a polygamous union. Either way, it supports the basic tenet of being respectful of your father, who stands in for God in the family constitution. Again we see that wrongly exercising your father's prerogative and privilege is equated to usurping the authority of Yahweh, which (in case you've lost your bearings) is a bad thing. And again, this mitzvah is a subset of the Seventh Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery." When we are totally faithful to our spouses (and our God), we don't have to go out of our way to obey any of these "Laws." They're perfectly natural.

(86)

Not to commit incest with one's sister (Lev. 18:9) (CCN127). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

9 'The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you do not uncover

Do not commit incest with your sister. "The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover." (Leviticus 18:9) Now the instructions are getting a bit more real-world practical. Sisters and half-sisters are now taken off the eligible-wife-material roster. Abram, you'll recall, had married his half-sister, Sarai. This was not an uncommon practice in the patriarchal era, when local populations were sparse and the gene pool was still relatively deep. But here, half a millennium later, we see Yahweh prohibiting such unions among the children of Israel. God, having designed our DNA, knew that successive generations of inbreeding could bring debilitating recessive genes to the surface, making the population as a whole more susceptible to a wide range of hereditary diseases and genetic abnormalities. Like many of these mitzvot, the reason for God's instruction would not be understood for thousands of years, but those who followed the "Owner's Manual" carefully in the meantime were nevertheless protected in spite of their lack of scientific knowledge.

(87)

Not to commit incest with one's father's wife's daughter (Lev. 18:11) (CCN128). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

11 'The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, brought forth by your father, she is your sister, you do not uncover her nakedness.

Do not commit incest with your father's wife's daughter. "The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, begotten by your father—she is your sister—you shall not uncover her nakedness." (Leviticus 18:11) Is there an echo in here? Under normal circumstances, the object here would be the same as in #86. But if the father has remarried or taken a second wife, a daughter of that union (i.e., one's step-sister) is also included in the do-not-marry list. According to the Inventor of our human genome, the relationship is still too close to avoid weakening the gene pool.

(88)

Not to commit incest with one's son's daughter (Lev. 18:10) (CCN119) (Note: CC treats this and the next as one commandment; however, Rambam treats them as two). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

10 'The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you do not uncover, for theirs is your own nakedness

Do not commit incest with your son's daughter. "The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for theirs is your own nakedness." (Leviticus 18:10) Chafetz Chayim's list of the 613 mitzvot lists this one and #89 together, while Maimonides lists them separately. They're way ahead of me. I'm still scratching my head trying to figure out who would be sick enough to want to have sex with his own granddaughter. But we should not neglect the overall context of the passage. Yahweh explains why He took the trouble to describe the filth the Israelites were not to roll around in: "Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am Yahweh your God.

According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am Yahweh your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am Yahweh." (Leviticus 18:1-5) They had apparently seen all of these aberrant behaviors being practiced in Egypt, and they would see them again taking place in Canaan (that is, if they let the inhabitants of the Land live long enough to observe their deviant lifestyles first hand—something they were not supposed to do). God in His wisdom knew that it wouldn't be sufficient to simply say "Be faithful to your own wife" after the children of Israel had been exposed to pagan sexual practices in Egypt for four hundred years. He had to spell it out.

(89)

Not to commit incest with one's daughter's daughter (Lev. 18:10) (CCN119) (Note: CC treats this and the previous as one commandment; however, Rambam treats them as two). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

10 'The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you do not uncover, for theirs is your own nakedness

Do not commit incest with your daughter's daughter. "The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for theirs is your own nakedness." (Leviticus 18:10) Forget the DNA thing for a moment. Wanting to have sex with someone two generations removed is just plain creepy; which explains why Satan promotes the idea. In 622, Muhammad, who was fifty at the time, married a six-year-old girl named Aisha, the daughter of his best (okay, his only) friend, Abu Bakr. Even if he waited a while to consummate the marriage, there's still only one accurate word for that kind of behavior: pedophilia. Allah loves it; Yahweh hates it. By the way, the highest rate of close-family marriage in the world to this very day is Muhammad's homeland, Saudi Arabia, where 56.8 percent of all marriages are between close relatives.

(90)

Not to commit incest with one's daughter (this is not explicitly in the Torah but is inferred from other explicit commands that would include it) (CCN120). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

Do not commit incest with your daughter. Tracey Rich of Judaism 101 observes that this is not found explicitly in the Torah but is inferred from other commands that would include it. I would single out Leviticus 18:17 as a proof text—"You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter." If you have a daughter, it is axiomatic that you have at one point "uncovered the nakedness" of her mother, whether or not she is actually your wife. I'd say the mitzvah is more than "inferred." It's commanded.

(91)

Not to commit incest with one's father's sister (Lev. 18:12) (CCN129). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

12 'The nakedness of your father's sister you do not uncover, she is your father's flesh.

Do not commit incest with your mother's sister. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is near of kin to your mother." (Leviticus 18:13) There went the apparent loophole left by verse 12: your aunt on your mother's side is out of bounds as well. The odd phrasing is not due to the fact that there is no generic word for "aunt" in Hebrew (it's dodah, used in verse 14—see #93). Yahweh is just leaving no stone unturned—a man's father's sister and his mother's sister are both forbidden as sexual partners.

Do not commit incest with your father's sister. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is near of kin to your father." (Leviticus 18:12) In other words, do not marry (or merely have sexual relations with) your aunt on your father's side, even if your uncle has passed away and she is free to remarry: she is too near a relation to you to be genetically safe.

(92)

Not to commit incest with one's mother's sister (Lev. 18:13) (CCN130). See Prohibited Marriages and Illegitimate Children.

13 'The nakedness of your mother's sister you do not uncover, for she is your mother's flesh. Do not commit incest with your mother's sister. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is near of kin to your mother." (Leviticus 18:13) There went the apparent loophole left by verse 12: your aunt on your mother's side is out of bounds as well. The odd phrasing is not due to the fact that there is no generic word for "aunt" in Hebrew (it's dodah, used in verse 14—see #93). Yahweh is just leaving no stone unturned—a man's father's sister and his mother's sister are both forbidden as sexual partners.

(93)

Do not commit incest with your father's brother's wife. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother. You shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt." (Leviticus 18:14) Though there is no genetic link to be wary of, there's still the little matter of adultery to deal with. Beyond that, one's uncle is the closest of relations to your father or mother; therefore the same sort of respect is due to them as should be shown to one's parents.

(94)

Do not commit sodomy with your father's brother. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother." (Leviticus 18:14). Sodomy, or any sort of homosexual relationship, is singled out for prohibition elsewhere (see #103). The actual Torah wording does not presuppose an all-male audience; this applies to women as well. Sexual intimacy of any kind with one's uncle is forbidden.

(95)

Do not commit incest with your son's wife. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law—she is your son's wife—you shall not uncover her nakedness." (Leviticus 18:15) This is the one that Judah—had there been a written law at that time—would have blown in Genesis 38—which brings up an interesting question. Was it, or was it not, a sin for Judah, since the Law had not yet been handed down, and he didn't know the prostitute he was hiring was his daughter-in-law anyway? It's like the old "If a tree falls in the forest and there's nobody there to hear it, does it make a sound?" conundrum. The answer here, as with the tree, is yes. "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:19-20) Sin existed before the Law was given; the Law merely made us aware of how badly we were failing. It doesn't matter how many laws there are, six million, six hundred thirteen, or only one (as in "Don't eat the fruit of that tree"). If we fall short of God's standard in any way (and we all do), we will find ourselves in need of redemption, a means of reconciliation with our Father. Nor does the mechanism for that reconciliation reside in the Law: Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him as righteousness. Or stated in terms of our own dispensation, "Yahshua answered and said unto them, 'This is the work of Yahovah, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'" (John 6:29)

(96)

Do not commit incest with your brother's wife. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness." (Leviticus 18:16) No gene-pool issues here, just respect for another son of your father—and in the larger context of adultery in general, respect for another child of your Heavenly Father. This mitzvah obviously applies only to a living brother's wife, not a dead brother's widow, for whom the rules are reversed under certain conditions (see #79, 80, and 81).

(97)

Do not commit incest with your wife's daughter. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter." (Leviticus 18:17) This would include not only your own daughter, but also any daughters that your wife might have brought from a previous relationship. This is the sort of thing that will (or at least should) get you thrown in jail in this country. Where would we be without the influence of the Old Testament Scriptures on our society and its laws? It's sad that God should even have felt like He had to bring this up, but as I said, this whole passage is

a warning not to adopt the sick pagan practices of Israel's former or future homelands. They were to remain holy, set apart for Yahweh's purposes. If only they had.

(98)

Do not commit incest with the daughter of your wife's son. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter...to uncover her nakedness. They are near of kin to her. It is wickedness." (Leviticus 18:17) For reasons too numerous to recount, a man is to abstain from sexual relations with his granddaughter. Duh

(99)

Do not commit incest with the daughter of your wife's daughter. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her...daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness. They are near of kin to her. It is wickedness." (Leviticus 18:17). Okay, one more time, because we might have missed it. It doesn't matter what side of the family your granddaughter is on, your son's or your daughter's, it doesn't matter how cute she is, or how much older than her age she looks, or how little self-restraint you're willing to exercise: incest is a bad thing—keep your hands off of her.