

# FAQ VOL II

A WORK IN PROGRESS

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**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**

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# Frequently Asked Questions

VOLUME II

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***Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.***

# Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*  
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*  
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)  
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament  
Ara: Aramaic  
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)  
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)  
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)  
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.  
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)  
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*  
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.  
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)  
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)  
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)  
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)  
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)  
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition  
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls  
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*  
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*  
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)  
Ger: German  
GNT: Greek New Testament  
Grk: Greek  
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)  
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)  
Heb: Hebrew  
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible  
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*  
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*  
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*  
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*  
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)  
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)  
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*  
KJV: King James Version  
Lattimore: *The New Testament* by Richmond Lattimore (1996)  
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)  
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)  
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)  
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)  
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)  
LXX: Septuagint  
m. Mishnah  
MT: Masoretic Text  
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)  
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)  
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*  
NEB: New English Bible (1970)  
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*  
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)  
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*  
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*  
NIV: New International Version (1984)  
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)  
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)  
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)  
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)  
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)  
NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

REB: Revised English Bible (1989)

RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

t. Tosefta

Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament

Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)

TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition

v(s). verse(s)

Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

Vul: Latin Vulgate

YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

# Polygamy, Aberration

*Blogcast, 09 May, 2019*

**What is polygamy? While it is surely an uncomfortable topic to discuss, a man having multiple wives is something that one encounters in reading various parts of the Tanach. How should we as Messiah followers approach this topic? Today's Messianic people do read the Torah on a fairly consistent basis, and doubtlessly encounter polygamy.**

No one who reads the Bible denies that the practice of a man having more than one wife is seen within the text. The Patriarch Jacob, who was the progenitor of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, had two wives and two concubines (Genesis 31:17; 37:2). King David had multiple wives (1 Samuel 18:17-30; 25:38-43; 2 Samuel 3:2-5). King Solomon had hundreds of wives and concubines (1 Kings 3:1; 11:3) which made up an entire harem (Song of Songs 6:8).

From time to time, the thought will indeed be expressed that since some of the most important figures in the Tanach Scriptures had multiple wives, what is the problem if a man had multiple wives today? There are, in fact, many problems to be explored when considering whether or not polygamy is an acceptable practice for today's Body of Messiah. Was it the ideal at Creation for the man to have more than one wife? When a man has more than one wife, is he truly fulfilled emotionally and spiritually with his multiple spouses? Is the household where one man has multiple wives and children from those multiple wives truly a place of love and affection, or one of discord and suspicion? Does the Bible portray men who had polygamous relationships as being genuinely fulfilled, and children who were true examples of godliness? Does a man having multiple wives express the sentiment that he places great value on women, or that they are simply property to be acquired? And, how many in the Biblical period actually had the financial means to afford more than one wife? **Does the Bible really lend support to the practice of polygamy today?** These are some of the vital questions which need to be considered when approaching polygamy.

While polygamy is recorded to have been practiced in Scripture—**it by no means is endorsed by Scripture!** Not a single commandment in the Torah condones the practice of polygamy. God never intended a man to have more than one wife, families where the husband is polygamous have suffered immensely from it, and male polygamists today are motivated

by uncontrollable sexual urges which demean women and the equality restored restored to the genders in the post-resurrection era (Galatians 3:28).

Polygamy as a practice is seen in various parts of the Tanach, but one which the Jewish Synagogue abandoned long before the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 17:17 specifically warned the future kings of Israel, “He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away” (NASU).

With the creation of the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, the ideal state has been for marriage to be between one man and one woman: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, NASU), a principle upheld by Yeshua the Messiah (Mark 10:7-8; Mathew 19:5). It is only after the Fall when forms of polygamy were practiced, and to argue that this is to be a normative, even encouraged practice, skews God’s original intent at Creation.

It is true that various Patriarchs and monarchs of Israel did have multiple wives, and seemingly did not incur any significant penalties from the Lord for doing so. Yet this must be balanced with the fact that the whole nation of Israel was commanded to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days each year (Leviticus 23:33-34), and Nehemiah says that “The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day” (Nehemiah 8:17, NASU)—which was after the Babylonian exile! The Ancient Israelites did not always follow the commands of God, and because of His love and grace He often overlooked their significant transgressions. Severe chastisement to Israel often did not come until idolatry, gross child sacrifice, and outright rebellion against the Lord were practiced.

From a practical standpoint, while Bible readers see polygamy observed by some members of Ancient Israelite society, it is far fetched to think that every single Israelite man could economically afford more than one wife. On the contrary, the fact that only Patriarchs, leaders, and monarchs of Israel are portrayed as having multiple wives, demonstrates **how little** this practice was actually observed. And was it really worth it for them? When we read that Jacob had both Leah and Rachel as his wives, or David and Solomon had multiple wives—were their households places of genuine love and affection, or riddled with relational problems? Were their children behaved or unruly? 1 Kings 11:4 is not very good evidence in favor of polygamy: “For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God” (NASU). A significant reason why Ancient Israel was ultimately divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms goes back to Solomon’s incessant polygamy, and the state funded idolatry he sponsored.

The Apostolic Scriptures make it abundantly clear that polygamy is something which is **not** to be practiced by the people of God today. The significant passages in the Gospels where Yeshua addresses marriage affirm Genesis’ teaching on one man and one woman (Mark 10:2-12; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Luke 16:18). The Apostle Paul stated candidly in 1 Corinthians 7:2,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. “monogamy and polygamy,” in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 437.

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## Polygamy, Aberration

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“each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband” (NASU). He also instructed Timothy in Ephesus that overseers and deacons were only to be allowed one wife (1 Timothy 3:2, 12). Furthermore, and perhaps most significant, he asserted in Ephesians 5:21-33 that the institution of marriage is to be a reflection on the Messiah’s service for the *ekklēsia*. This involved the Lord serving a single body of people, *not* multiple bodies of people: “let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:33, RSV).

In many cases, trying to Biblically justify polygamy—as though it is a good thing that God intended from Creation—**is almost always used as a way for men to fulfill sexual urges which cannot be kept under control.** Women are frequently the victims of such inappropriate and ungodly behavior, often because of men who want to treat them as little more than chattel or property.

The discussion regarding polygamy has been unleashed among those who are largely unsure about how what it means to recapture a Torah foundation for one’s faith in Yeshua. Does it mean that only the Books of Genesis-Deuteronomy are relevant to one’s faith? Or does it mean that the Pentateuch is one stepping stone—and indeed a largely overlooked stepping stone—of God’s continually progressive salvation history (cf. Hebrews 1:1-2)? If it is the latter, then it is clear that the Torah’s legislation is intended to be a significant step forward, *but not the only step*, which is to return us to what the first man and woman had in Eden. The ideal state God wants us to have does not include polygamy, and the Scriptures are clear that those who practiced it did not incur beneficial and lasting relationships as a result.

If anyone thinks that polygamy is something to be embraced and encouraged, then such views stand in direct contrast to God’s intention at Creation and the teachings of Yeshua the Messiah. They are also degrading to the female gender, and the equality of males and females in the Body of Messiah.