

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, MARRIAGE, AND HOUSEHOLD LIFE FROM A HEBREW PERSPECTIVE

Parts Seven Through Ten — Prohibited Acts, Divorce, Special Topics, and Conclusion

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Torah supersedes all commentary. Three-religion lens applied throughout.

PART SEVEN: PROHIBITED ACTS

31. Homosexuality — The Hebrew Prohibition, the Three-Religion Witness, and the Medical Data

This section addresses male homosexual intercourse as the Torah defines and prohibits it. It applies the three-religion standard throughout: showing where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each uphold the Torah's prohibition, where each departs from the Torah's reasoning, and what the medical evidence independently confirms.

The Torah's Prohibition — Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22 and 20:13

You shall not lie [*shakav*] with a man as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination [*toevah*]. —Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22

If a man lies with a man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

—Vayikra (Leviticus) 20:13

The Hebrew word *shakav* (H7901) is the Torah's specific word for sexual intercourse, as documented in Section 6. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22** prohibits the specific act of one man penetrating another man sexually. The word *toevah* (תועבה — H8441) means something disgusting, morally abhorrent — a designation the Torah reserves for acts that violate the fundamental covenant design of the created order. BDB defines it as 'properly, something disgusting (morally), i.e. an abhorrence; especially idolatry.' The prohibition is on the specific act of anal penetration of one man by another — not on attraction, orientation, or internal emotional experience. The Torah regulates behavior, not identity.

The anatomical basis is **Beresheet (Genesis) 2:24**: the one-flesh covenant is the joining of male and female in vaginal union. Two men cannot become *echad basar*. The act two men can perform sexually — anal intercourse — is placed under *toevah* because it violates the covenant design of the human body and produces the measurable physical harm the medical evidence documents.

MIQDASH BETHEL POSITION: The Torah text is the sole governing standard. All three religious traditions below are evaluated against it. Where they uphold Torah, they are cited as corroboration. Where they depart from Torah's reasoning — even when reaching the same conclusion — the departure is identified.

Judaism on Homosexuality — Where It Upholds Torah and Where It Departs

Orthodox and traditional Judaism upholds the Torah's prohibition on male homosexual intercourse on the basis of **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22** and 20:13. The Talmud classifies it among the most serious of all prohibitions — one of the *arayot* that must be refused even under threat of death. The **Rambam**, Shulchan Aruch, and the mainstream of halakhic literature are unanimous: the act is prohibited regardless of consent, relationship, or circumstances. On this specific question, traditional Judaism upholds the Torah text.

Where Judaism departs from Torah: Reform and Conservative Judaism have progressively moved to permit homosexual relationships and same-sex unions, with the Reform movement doing so formally in the 1990s and the Conservative movement following in 2006. These positions are rabbinic departures from the Torah text — the product of contemporary social pressure reinterpreting a plain prohibition. The Torah text has not changed. The rabbinic interpretation has. When Talmud and Torah conflict, this study identifies the departure; when modern Jewish denominations depart from the Torah, that departure is equally identified. The Torah's prohibition remains binding.

Islam on Homosexuality — Where It Upholds Torah and Where It Departs

Islam upholds the Torah's prohibition on male homosexual intercourse explicitly and without equivocation. The Quran addresses homosexuality primarily through the story of Lut (the Islamic name for **Lot**), the same figure in **Beresheet (Genesis) 19**. The Quran recounts the account at least fourteen times across multiple surahs:

And remember when Lut said to his people: Do you commit a shameful deed that no man has ever done before? You lust after men instead of women. You are certainly a transgressing people. —Al-A'raf 7:80–81

Of all the creatures in the world, do you approach males and leave those whom Allah created for you as your mates? Rather, you are a transgressing people! —Ash-Shu'ara 26:165–166

The Islamic consensus across all four major schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali) is that male homosexual intercourse is haram (forbidden) at the highest level. The hadith confirms the Quranic position: the Prophet is reported to have said, 'Cursed is the one who does what the people of Lut did' (Ahmad 1878, classed sahih by al-Albani). There is no Islamic school of jurisprudence — classical or medieval — that permitted male homosexual intercourse. The Islamic prohibition tracks the Torah prohibition both in its conclusion and in its Tanakh-sourced narrative basis (the Lut/**Lot** story).

Where Islam departs from Torah: Islam grounds its prohibition in the Lut narrative, Quranic revelation, and hadith — not directly in the Torah text of **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22**. The reasoning is parallel but the authority cited is different. For Miqdash Bethel, the Torah text governs. Islam's conclusion confirms the Torah. The difference in sourcing is noted for accuracy but does not undermine the convergence. Additionally, small numbers of contemporary progressive Muslim scholars attempt to reinterpret the Lut narrative as concerning rape and inhospitality rather than homosexuality. This minority reinterpretation contradicts the Quran's own plain language — 'you lust after men instead of women' — and is rejected by all mainstream Islamic scholarship.

Christianity on Homosexuality — Where It Upholds Torah and Where It Departs

Traditional Christianity upholds the prohibition on male homosexual intercourse. The mainstream of Christian history — Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and the majority of Protestantism through the 20th century — treated male homosexual intercourse as gravely sinful. Roman

Catholicism continues to formally prohibit it. Traditional Anglicanism, traditional Lutheranism, Southern Baptist, and the majority of evangelical Christianity do likewise.

Where Christianity departs from Torah: Christianity's prohibition is grounded primarily in Paul's letters — Romans 1:26–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10 — not in the Torah texts of **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22** and 20:13. This means Christianity arrived at the right conclusion through the wrong authority for Miqdash Bethel's standard. Paul's letters are not Torah. They are New Testament commentary that, in this instance, confirms what Torah says — but when Christianity grounds the prohibition in Paul rather than in **Yahweh's** direct command, it introduces a dependency on a human writer rather than the Torah's own text. The prohibition stands whether Paul wrote it or not because **Yahweh** said it in Vayikra (Leviticus). Paul does not add authority to **Yahweh's** command; he is simply a later voice confirming it.

The departure of liberal Protestantism — the acceptance of same-sex relationships and ordination of openly homosexual clergy in denominations including the Episcopal Church, ELCA, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, and others since the 1990s — represents a full break with Torah's plain text. These denominations have not revised Torah. They have abandoned it in favor of contemporary cultural consensus. This study identifies that departure clearly.

Act vs. Orientation — The Torah's Precise Standard

All three traditions, when they are at their best, agree with what the Torah actually says: the prohibition is on the act. A man who experiences attraction to other men but does not act on that attraction has not violated the Torah of **Yahweh**. The Torah regulates behavior, not internal states. A man who struggles with same-sex attraction and chooses to remain celibate or to pursue covenant marriage with a woman is living within the Torah's framework — the same framework that requires every unmarried person to manage their sexual drives within covenant boundaries. All three traditions historically understood this distinction, even if their pastoral application of it has been inconsistent.

The Medical Evidence — Torah Confirmed by Independent Science

The CDC, WHO, and decades of epidemiological research confirm what the Torah designated as **toevah**:

- Men who have sex with men (MSM) bear 43% of all primary and secondary syphilis cases in the United States, representing a disproportionate disease burden far exceeding their population percentage.
- MSM have a 1 in 6 lifetime risk of contracting HIV in the United States, compared to 1 in 524 for heterosexual men.
- Receptive anal sex is 13 times more likely to result in HIV infection than receptive vaginal sex, due to the thin and easily damaged anal lining.
- The WHO documents that MSM populations globally bear a disproportionate burden of gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, hepatitis B, HPV, and herpes transmission.

The Torah's **toevah** designation is not theological arbitrariness. It is **Yahweh's** pre-scientific identification of a category of act that produces the exact outcomes modern medicine has now documented quantitatively. The act is biologically destructive because it violates the covenant design of the human body. The medical evidence and the Torah arrive at the same conclusion from completely different directions — which is exactly what the two-or-three-witnesses standard of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** requires.

32. Anal Sex — What the Torah Prohibits, What the Three Traditions Say, and What Medicine Confirms

The Torah's framework on anal intercourse has been addressed in its specific contexts throughout this study. This section consolidates the complete picture, applying the three-religion standard throughout.

Between Two Men — Torah Prohibition

Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22 and 20:13 prohibit anal intercourse between two men clearly and with capital consequence. This is addressed in full in Section 31.

Between Husband and Wife — Torah Design vs. Talmudic Commentary

MIQDASH BETHEL POSITION: The permission for anal intercourse between husband and wife comes from Talmudic legal reasoning (Nedarim 20b) and **Rambam's** codification, not from a Torah text. The Torah's one-flesh design in **Beresheet (Genesis) 2:24** is anatomically specific to vaginal union. Miqdash Bethel follows the Torah text. The Talmudic permission is documented here as historical Jewish commentary, not as this assembly's doctrinal position.

The Talmud (Nedarim 20b) and **Rambam** (Mishneh Torah 21:9) permit anal intercourse between husband and wife when done occasionally and not as a systematic means of avoiding procreation. This is a rabbinic ruling — the product of men reasoning beyond the Torah text, not a Torah verse. No Torah verse creates a separate category of permitted anal intercourse between husband and wife. The Torah's anatomical design in **Beresheet (Genesis) 2:24** establishes vaginal union as the one-flesh covenant.

Islam — Confirms Torah's Anatomical Boundary

Islam explicitly prohibits anal intercourse between husband and wife and does so with the same anatomical logic as the Torah's own design. Al-Baqarah 2:223 states that wives are a tilth and a man may go to his tilth 'as he wills.' The tafsir (classical Islamic commentary) of this verse is unanimous across all major Islamic schools: 'as he wills' means in any position, at any time — as long as intercourse occurs in the vagina. The Prophet's explicit statement is recorded in multiple authenticated hadith: 'From the front or from behind, as long as it is in the farj (vagina)' (Imam Ahmad, Ibn Abbas). A separate authenticated hadith curses anal intercourse with a wife directly: 'Cursed is the one who has intercourse with women in their back passages' (Ibn Udayy 1:211, classed sahih by al-Albani in Adab al-Zafaf). Islamic law, which permits many things modern secular culture does not — including polygyny and concubinage — explicitly prohibits husband-wife anal intercourse on grounds that track the Torah's anatomical design. On this specific question, Islam upholds the Torah and the Talmud goes beyond it.

Christianity — Matrimonial Chastity Within Covenant Design

The Puritan William Gouge, whose *Of Domestic Duties* (1622) was the most widely distributed Christian marriage manual of the 17th century — routinely given by Puritan pastors to newly married couples — placed marital sexual intimacy within the framework he called 'matrimonial chastity.' For Gouge, married people enjoying sexual intimacy with their spouses was not only permitted but was a covenant gift and obligation. He explicitly taught that husbands must give wives 'due benevolence' with 'good will and delight, willingly, readily, and cheerfully.' Gouge's framework of matrimonial chastity, however, operated within the created design of the body — it did not extend to acts outside that design. The mainstream Christian tradition, whatever its failures on other questions, did not historically teach that anal intercourse between husband and

wife was a legitimate expression of matrimonial chastity. Both Islam and the Christian tradition confirm the Torah's anatomical boundary on this question.

Medical Evidence

- The anal lining is significantly thinner than the vaginal wall and lacks the natural lubrication the vagina produces. Tearing and abrasion are far more likely during anal intercourse.
- Tears in the anal lining increase exposure of blood and mucous membrane to pathogens — creating efficient transmission routes for HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, HPV, and other STIs.
- Rectal bacteria naturally present in fecal matter can enter tears, producing anal abscesses and infections requiring antibiotic treatment.
- A 2016 study in the American Journal of Gastroenterology found elevated rates of fecal incontinence among people who had engaged in anal intercourse.

A husband who loves his wife with covenant love will weigh both the Torah's anatomical design and the physical reality of how **Yahweh** built her body. The Torah's permission of something does not mean it carries no physical risk. The wife's consent and physical comfort are not optional considerations. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (the great Islamic scholar) stated plainly: 'If he has forced her, then this is abuse, as compulsion into sexual intercourse is abuse. Indeed, such intercourse is carried out in the manner of a criminal offence.' This Islamic ruling on spousal sexual consent confirms the Torah's own prohibition on forcing the wife.

33. Lesbianism — The Torah's Silence, the Three Traditions, and What It All Means

This section addresses female homosexual acts through the three-religion lens, building on the discussion in Section 25.

The Torah's Silence — What It Does and Does Not Mean

The Torah contains no explicit prohibition on sexual activity between two women. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18** and 20 — the Torah's most comprehensive catalog of prohibited sexual acts — address male homosexual intercourse (18:22), bestiality for both sexes (18:23–24), and numerous incest prohibitions. No verse prohibits female-to-female sexual activity. The Torah's silence is not an endorsement. It is an anatomical recognition: two women cannot perform the specific act **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22** prohibits (the penetration of one male by another), and two women cannot become *echad basar*. The prohibition's anatomical logic simply does not reach the same place when applied to two women, because the act is categorically different.

MIQDASH BETHEL POSITION: The Torah's silence means the Torah does not speak to this act in the same direct way it speaks to male homosexual intercourse. This assembly does not add prohibitions the Torah does not state. However, the Torah's covenant design — which creates the woman as a companion for the man, not for another woman — frames the limits within which female sexuality belongs.

Judaism on Female Homosexual Acts

The Talmud (Yevamot 76a) addresses women engaged in sexual activity together using the phrase *nashim mesolelot zeh bezeh* — women 'rubbing against each other.' Rav Huna describes it as *pritzuta* (lewdness) and says it disqualifies a woman from marrying a Kohen.

Rambam categorizes it as prohibited under **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:3**'s general instruction not to do as Egypt and Canaan did. Most medieval halakhic authorities do not classify it as a biblical prohibition of the same order as the *arayot*. It is treated as rabbinic-level censure — discouraged and considered contrary to covenant dignity but not carrying the capital consequence of the **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18** list. This study documents the Talmudic and halakhic position accurately: it is commentary, not Torah text.

Islam on Female Homosexual Acts

The Quran contains no verse that explicitly prohibits sexual acts between two women, mirroring the Torah's silence. Some Islamic scholars point to Surah An-Nisa 4:15 ('those who commit fahisha among your women') as potentially applicable, but classical tafsir does not primarily read this verse as addressing lesbianism. The hadith literature contains condemnations of women who imitate men and effeminate men, but no hadith establishes a capital punishment for female homosexual acts equivalent to that established for male homosexual intercourse. Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) across all four major schools treats female homosexual acts as haram (prohibited) and sinful but does not impose hadd (fixed legal punishment) on them. Islam's position thus mirrors the Torah's own distinction: male homosexual intercourse receives explicit direct prohibition; female homosexual activity is in a different legal category. Where Islam confirms Torah's silence, it is cited as corroboration.

Christianity on Female Homosexual Acts

Christianity grounds its prohibition on female homosexual acts primarily in Paul's letter to the Romans (1:26), which states that women 'exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.' This is the primary New Testament text. However, as with male homosexuality, Paul's letters are not Torah. They are later commentary. The Pauline condemnation of female homosexual acts confirms a position consistent with the Torah's covenant design even though it is not itself Torah text. Traditional Catholic, Orthodox, and conservative Protestant Christianity prohibit female homosexual relationships. Liberal Protestantism has progressively accepted them since the 1990s for the same reasons it accepted male homosexual relationships — contemporary cultural pressure overriding the foundational texts.

The Covenant Design Standard

The Torah's design of **Beresheet (Genesis) 2:24** places the woman as a covenant companion to the man. She was created as ezer kenegdo (a help corresponding to him) for the man — not for another woman. Two women cannot become *echad basar*. Two women cannot procreate. The covenant design of the woman's sexuality is oriented toward covenant union with the man. When a woman chooses another woman as her exclusive sexual and relational partner, replacing the man entirely, she has stepped outside the covenant design — even where the Torah does not apply the same explicit prohibition it applies to male homosexual intercourse. This study identifies that departure from the Torah's design without adding a specific prohibition the Torah itself does not state.

34. Bestiality — The Prohibition and the Three-Religion Consensus

You shall not lie carnally with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it; neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion [tevel]. —Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:23

The Hebrew word *tevel* (תֵּבֵל) means confusion, mixture, perversion — the improper mixing of what **Yahweh** has placed in separate categories. BDB documents it as derived from the root meaning to pollute or confuse. Bestiality confuses the boundary **Yahweh** established between humans (made in the image of **Elohim** — **Beresheet (Genesis) 1:27**) and animals (created as distinct beings under human dominion — **Beresheet (Genesis) 1:28**). The act violates the covenant dignity of the image-bearer.

The verse addresses both men and women explicitly. This is one of the few sexual prohibitions in the Torah that names both sexes as potential violators in the same verse. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 20:15–16** imposes capital punishment for both the person and the animal.

Three-Religion Consensus

This is one of the few sexual subjects on which all three traditions uphold the Torah without notable departure. Jewish law categorically prohibits bestiality as an extension of the *arayot* framework. Islam categorically prohibits it as a violation of natural order — the Prophet is reported to have said, 'Cursed is the one who has intercourse with an animal' (Ahmad 1878, classed sahih by al-Albani). Traditional Christianity categorically prohibits it as an abomination violating both natural law and the image of God in the person. All three traditions agree with Torah here. The fact that bestiality is legal in some jurisdictions globally and practiced in various subcultures is not a theological controversy — it is a symptom of what happens when a civilization abandons the Torah's covenant framework entirely.

35. Forbidden Relations — The Full Arayot List from Vayikra (Leviticus) 18

Vayikra (Leviticus) 18 contains the Torah's most comprehensive catalog of prohibited sexual relations. The category is called *arayot* (עֲרִיּוֹת) — literally 'nakedness' — derived from *ervah* (H6172), the nakedness that must not be uncovered. To 'uncover the nakedness' of a prohibited person is to engage in sexual intercourse with them. These prohibitions are among the most serious in the entire Torah — the text states that transgressing them produces defilement of the person, defilement of the land, and the covenant consequence of *karet* (being cut off from the people).

The Complete Arayot List — Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:6–23

- V. 6 — General principle: No man shall approach any close relative (she'er *basar* — flesh of his flesh) to uncover nakedness.
- V. 7 — Father and mother: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother.
- V. 8 — Father's wife: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife. (Exception: levirate marriage — **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5–10** when the brother has died childless.)
- V. 9 — Sister: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, whether born of father or mother, whether at home or outside. Full and half-sisters both prohibited.
- V. 10 — Son's daughter or daughter's daughter: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter.
- V. 11 — Father's wife's daughter: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, born of your father; she is your sister.

- V. 12 — Father's sister: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's near kinswoman.
- V. 13 — Mother's sister: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's near kinswoman.
- V. 14 — Father's brother's wife: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother by approaching his wife; she is your aunt. (Exception: levirate — **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5–10.**)
- V. 15 — Daughter-in-law: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife.
- V. 16 — Brother's wife: You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. (Exception: levirate when brother died childless.)
- V. 17 — A woman and her daughter or granddaughter: You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, or of her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter. They are close relatives; it is zimmah (lewdness).
- V. 18 — A wife's sister during the wife's lifetime: You shall not take a wife's sister as a rival wife during the wife's life. This is the sororal restriction on polygyny — it prohibits the specific combination, not polygyny generally.
- V. 19 — A woman in *niddah*: You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her period of menstrual uncleanness.
- V. 20 — Another man's wife: You shall not give your emission to your neighbor's wife. This is the *na'aph* prohibition in direct anatomical language.
- V. 22 — Male with male: You shall not lie with a man as with a woman; it is an abomination.
- V. 23 — Animals: You shall not lie with any animal, nor shall a woman give herself to an animal; it is perversion.

The Covenant Rationale and Three-Religion Confirmation

Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:24–30 provides the covenant rationale: these are the practices of the nations who occupied the land before Yisra'el. The land itself was defiled by these practices and 'vomited out' its inhabitants. Yisra'el is warned the land will do the same to them if they follow these practices. The *arayot* are not merely personal moral failures — they are covenant violations with land-level consequences.

All three traditions acknowledge this list. Judaism codifies it throughout halakha as the core of sexual law. Islam's parallel list of forbidden marriage degrees in Surah An-Nisa 4:22–24 closely tracks the Torah's incest prohibitions, drawing from the same Hebraic root. Christianity has historically maintained this list as well — though its grounding of the prohibition in natural law and Paul's letters, rather than the Torah's direct authority, represents the familiar pattern of arriving at the right conclusion through the wrong source of authority. On the substance of the *arayot* list, all three traditions uphold the Torah.

PART EIGHT: DIVORCE

36. Divorce in Torah — The Get, the Grounds, the Process, and the Three-Religion Parallel

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:1–4 is the Torah's primary legislative text on divorce. It is not a command to divorce — it is a regulation of the process when a husband determines divorce is necessary. The Torah assumes divorce will happen in a fallen world. Its concern is with the legal process, the protection of the wife's right to remarry, and one specific prohibition: a husband may not remarry a wife he has already divorced and who has since been married to another man.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:1–4 — The Text

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency [*ervat davar*] in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before

Yahweh. —Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:1–4

Key observations: The passage regulates divorce — it does not initiate it. The **get** (גֵּט) — written certificate of divorce — is required. Divorce is not accomplished by a declaration or separation. A written document placed in the wife's hand is required — **Yahweh's** protection for the wife against impulsive dismissal. The wife who receives a valid **get** is free to remarry. One specific prohibition: the original husband may not take her back after she has been married to and divorced from another man.

The Ervat Davar Debate — Grounds for Divorce

The Hebrew phrase *ervat davar* (עֲרֻוַת דָּבָר) — 'some indecency' or 'something obnoxious' — is the most debated phrase in the history of Jewish marital law. The Mishnah (Gittin 9:10) records the famous dispute:

- Beit Shammai: Refers specifically to sexual indecency — unchastity or sexual misconduct. The conservative restrictive position.
- Beit Hillel: Means 'any matter' — anything the husband finds displeasing, even burning his food. The liberal permissive position.
- Rabbi Akiva: Even further than Hillel — if the husband finds another woman more attractive, that is sufficient grounds. The extreme permissive position.

Rabbinic practice generally followed Beit Hillel. This study's position — grounded in the Torah text itself rather than any rabbinic school — is that *ervat davar* means something more than trivial displeasure but less than capital-offense adultery. It points to serious sexual misconduct falling short of provable adultery. Beit Hillel's interpretation produced exactly what the Torah's **get** procedure was designed to prevent: the easy, casual dismissal of a woman who no longer pleased her husband.

Rambam's Ten Torah Requirements of a Valid Get

Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Divorce 1:1–3) documents the ten elements the Torah requires for a valid **get**: (1) The **get** must come from the husband voluntarily. (2) It must be in writing. (3) The content must express that he has divorced and removed her from his possession. (4) It must express separation. (5) It must be written specifically for her. (6) It must require no other act except delivery. (7) He must hand it to her. (8) He must hand it to her in the presence of witnesses. (9) He must give it to her as a letter of divorce. (10) Only the husband or his authorized agent may hand it to her. These are **Yahweh's** protections for the divorced woman — ensuring the divorce is unambiguous, witnessed, and legally binding so she can remarry without ambiguity about her status.

Islam on Divorce — Where It Parallels Torah and Where It Departs

Islamic divorce law developed in direct conversation with the Hebraic tradition, and the structural parallels to the Torah's **get** process are remarkable. The primary Islamic divorce is **talaq** — an Arabic word meaning 'release' or 'freeing from the tether.' Like the Torah's **get**, **talaq** is a husband-initiated written or verbal declaration that dissolves the marriage covenant. Like the **get**, it requires a waiting period (**iddah** — three menstrual cycles, roughly three months) before the divorce is finalized. The **iddah** serves the same purpose as the Torah's implied post-divorce period: to ensure the wife is not pregnant, to allow time for reconciliation, and to give the dissolution proper deliberate weight rather than impulsive finality.

The Quran explicitly addresses divorce in multiple places. Surah At-**Talaq** (65) is devoted entirely to divorce procedure. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:228–232 addresses it as well. The structural parallels to **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24** are direct: the husband's right to initiate, the written process, the waiting period, the wife's right to keep her mahr (dowry) on husband-initiated divorce, and the ability of both parties to remarry after a valid divorce.

Islamic divorce additionally recognizes **khul** — the wife-initiated divorce in which the wife may seek dissolution of the marriage (generally returning her mahr to the husband as compensation) through the husband's agreement or through a judge. This parallels the Torah's mechanism by which a wife who has been denied her covenant rights (**sheer, kesut, onah**) may petition the beit din to compel the husband to issue the **get**. Both systems recognize that a wife cannot simply be held captive in a marriage the husband has functionally abandoned.

Where Islam departs from Torah on divorce: The practice of triple **talaq** (pronouncing 'I divorce you' three times in one sitting) has been debated within Islam and banned in some Muslim-majority countries. Its practice divorces a woman immediately and irrevocably without the Torah's implied deliberative process. Additionally, classical Islamic divorce law was historically applied in ways that gave the husband far more unilateral power than the Torah intends — including pronouncing **talaq** in anger, in jest, or while intoxicated. The Prophet specifically prohibited **talaq** in anger, and the Quran commands arbitration before divorce. Where Islamic practice departed from these principles, it departed from the Torah's own spirit.

Christianity on Divorce — Where It Departs from Torah Most Severely

Of the three traditions, Christianity has the most troubled history with divorce law, and the most severe departure from the Torah's framework. The Torah gives the **get** as a mercy for marriages that cannot continue. The Torah never prohibits a properly divorced woman from remarrying. The Torah never condemns a divorced person as perpetually sinful for the fact of their divorce. Christianity, by contrast, went through centuries of treating divorce as categorically impossible.

The Roman Catholic Church, following Augustine and the Council of Trent (1563), declared consummated sacramental marriage to be absolutely indissoluble. No adultery, no abandonment, no violence, no persistent neglect could dissolve it. The consequence: a woman

whose husband committed adultery, beat her, abandoned her, and never returned was still considered married to him in the eyes of the Church — and could not remarry. This is not Torah. The Torah's **get** exists precisely because **Yahweh** recognized that some marriages cannot continue in covenant integrity, and He provided a legal mechanism for releasing both parties.

The Protestant Reformation brought a partial correction. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Bucer all challenged the Catholic position on indissolubility, grounding divorce permissions in Scripture (primarily Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7) rather than Canon Law. Luther once said half-seriously that bigamy might be preferable to divorce — a statement that inadvertently acknowledges the Torah's own polygyny provisions. Calvin's Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1561 allowed divorce and remarriage on grounds of adultery, impotence, extreme religious incompatibility, and abandonment. The Reformers were moving back toward the Torah's framework, but they grounded their reforms in Paul and the Gospels rather than in the Torah's direct authority.

The practical result of Christianity's divorce history: millions of people — particularly women — were trapped in dangerous, destructive, and covenant-violating marriages because a Church institution had added a prohibition the Torah never contained. The Torah's **get** is **Yahweh's** mercy. The Catholic Church's indissolubility doctrine was human addition that overrode **Yahweh's** mercy. This is the precise pattern Miqdash Bethel identifies throughout: when human religious commentary adds prohibitions the Torah does not contain, the result is harm to real people that **Yahweh** never intended.

The Agunah Problem — Where Jewish Law Also Departs

Judaism's halakhic tradition, while it preserves the **get** process accurately, has produced its own departure from the Torah's covenant intent through the **agunah** (chained wife) problem. The Torah gives the husband the right to initiate the **get**. It does not give him the right to weaponize that right to torture his wife by refusing to issue it. A husband who refuses to give his wife a **get** — leaving her unable to remarry for years or decades while he has effectively abandoned the marriage — has turned **Yahweh's** instrument of mercy into a tool of cruelty. The Talmud recognized that in cases of neglect, violence, or abandonment, the beit din could compel the husband to issue the **get**. The failure of some contemporary halakhic communities to use this compulsion effectively has resulted in thousands of women trapped as agunot. This failure is a departure from the Torah's intent: the **get** was designed to free the wife, not to imprison her. All three traditions have produced specific departures from the Torah's covenant intent on divorce. All three are identified here.

37. Malachi 2:16 — The Corrected Hebrew and the Three-Religion Misuse

Malachi 2:16 has been misused for centuries by all three traditions to burden divorced people and condemn those who have experienced the dissolution of their marriages. The standard English translation — 'I hate divorce, says **Yahweh**' — is a mistranslation of the Hebrew text.

The Hebrew Text

כִּי־שָׂנֵא שְׁלַח אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָסַף חֲמַס עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ — If he hates [his wife] and divorces her, says **Yahweh** the **Elohim** of Yisra'el, then violence covers his garment. —Malachi 2:16 — literal Hebrew

The Hebrew verb *sane* (סָנַן) in the phrase *ki-sane shallach* is a Qal perfect, third masculine singular — 'he hates' — not the first person 'I hate.' The subject of the hating is the husband, not **Yahweh**. The NIV 1984 translation ('I hate divorce, says **Yahweh**') added the first person 'I' by repointing the Hebrew — a change not supported by the original consonantal text. The NIV corrected this in its 2011 revision to: 'The man who hates and divorces his wife... does violence to the one he should protect.'

The passage's meaning: A man who hates his wife and dismisses her — using the divorce process not as a legal instrument of covenant release but as a tool to discard a woman he has grown to despise — covers himself with violence. He was supposed to be her covering (**kesut** — protection and dignity). When he uses the divorce to harm rather than to release, he has turned **Yahweh's** covenant instrument of protection into a weapon against the woman he was supposed to cover.

How All Three Traditions Misused This Verse

The mistranslation 'I hate divorce, says **Yahweh**' has been weaponized across all three traditions to condemn divorced people — particularly divorced women — with a guilt **Yahweh** never attached to them.

In Judaism, this verse was sometimes used to stigmatize those who had received a **get**, even when the **get** was properly issued for legitimate grounds. **Yahweh's** tool of mercy was treated as something **Yahweh** hated, discouraging its proper use.

In Christianity, the mistranslation was foundational to the Catholic doctrine of indissolubility and was routinely used by Protestant churches as well to condemn divorced people, deny them communion, exclude them from church leadership, and create a two-tier system in which divorced people were treated as perpetually stained by a sin **Yahweh** never defined as such. The damage to divorced women in particular — who were already the more vulnerable party in most divorces — was immense.

In Islam, while the Quran does not use this verse, Islamic culture in various communities developed the same attitude — that divorce is inherently shameful, that divorced women are less desirable and less respectable, and that the social stigma of divorce should discourage its use even when it is warranted. The Prophet's hadith that 'of all permitted things, divorce is the most hated by Allah' has been used similarly, even though the Prophet meant to discourage casual divorce, not to condemn those for whom divorce was necessary and legitimate.

All three traditions used variations of this sentiment to harm people **Yahweh** never condemned. The corrected Hebrew text frees those people from a burden that was never theirs to carry. **Yahweh** does not hate the properly divorced person. He hates the man who hates his wife and uses the legal instrument of her freedom to harm rather than release her.

38. The Consequences of Divorce — For the Husband, the Wife, and the Children

This study does not minimize the harm of divorce. The research literature is consistent: divorce produces measurable negative outcomes for children and significant consequences for both adults. The following is documented fact, not moral judgment.

Effects on Children

- Children of divorced parents are approximately twice as likely to drop out of high school as children from intact families.

- They achieve lower levels of socioeconomic status and income as adults, on average.
- They are more likely to experience conflict in their own marriages and to divorce themselves — an intergenerational transmission pattern.
- They experience higher rates of anxiety, depression, and diminished sense of personal control.
- They are more likely to engage in substance abuse and behavioral misconduct.

Research also documents that in high-conflict households, divorce can reduce children's exposure to parental conflict and produce some positive outcomes. The point is not that divorce is never the right choice. The point is that it always carries cost, especially for children.

Effects on the Adults

- Increased hostility levels in both parties, even above the levels that precipitated the divorce.
- Significant financial disruption, particularly for women and children.
- Higher rates of poverty among divorced seniors — divorced seniors are five times more likely to live in poverty than married seniors.
- Increased rates of depression and mental health disorders in both former spouses in years following the divorce.

This evidence supports the Torah's framework — divorce is legally available but surrounded with procedural protections and framed as a last resort, not a first option. The stakes — children's lives, the woman's covenant security, the community's covenant fabric — demand nothing less.

39. When Divorce Is Necessary Versus When It Is Destructive

When Divorce Is Necessary

- Adultery: A wife who has committed *na'aph* has broken the covenant household at its foundation. The Torah's death penalty cannot be applied today, but the covenant breach is real and divorce is the appropriate covenant response.
- Persistent violation of the wife's covenant rights: A husband who refuses *sheer*, *kesut*, or *onah* despite being confronted has broken the covenant obligations of **Shemot (Exodus) 21:10**. The beit din can compel the *get*.
- Domestic violence: A husband who beats his wife violates the covenant of protection. The Talmud (Ketubot 77a) recognizes this as grounds for compelling divorce. Ibn al-Qayyim confirmed in Islamic law that forcing a wife into sexual intercourse constitutes abuse with legal consequences. Both traditions confirm the Torah's covenant protection standard.
- Abandonment: A husband who abandons his wife permanently without provision or care has functionally violated the covenant.

When Divorce Is Destructive

- When the marriage is experiencing conflict or difficulty but no fundamental covenant violation has occurred. Conflict is not covenant violation.
- When the husband seeks to exchange his first wife for a younger or more attractive woman. This is precisely what **Malachi 2:16** condemns.

- When a wife is going through a difficult season — illness, grief, depression — and the husband is treating her temporary diminishment as grounds for exit.

The Torah's standard for divorce is not 'when I am no longer happy.' It is 'when the covenant itself has been so fundamentally broken that the household cannot continue in covenant integrity.' That is a high bar. All three traditions, at their best, teach the same high bar. All three have also been used at their worst to apply that bar inconsistently — protecting unfaithful or abusive husbands while condemning the very women they harmed. The Torah's own text does not permit that inconsistency.

PART NINE: SPECIAL TOPICS

40. Levirate Marriage — Yibbum and Halizah — Torah, Three-Religion Comparison, and Application

The levirate marriage law (**yibbum** — יבום, from the root yavam, the husband's brother) is one of the most specific and distinctive marital laws in the entire Torah. It is addressed in **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5–10**, with background in **Beresheet (Genesis) 38** (Yehudah and Tamar) and the book of **Rut** (Ruth) (**Boaz** and **Rut** (Ruth)h).

The Law — Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5–10

If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Yisra'el. —Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5–6

The law establishes a specific obligation: when a man dies without a son, his brother is required to marry the widow. The purposes are explicit: to prevent the dead brother's name from being 'blotted out from Yisra'el,' to preserve the covenant household, and to protect the widow from destitution. If the living brother refuses, the widow performs the halizah ceremony: she removes his sandal in the presence of the elders, spits before him, and declares that he refused to build his brother's household. His family thereafter bears the name 'House of the Unsandaled One.' The halizah ceremony releases the widow to marry anyone she chooses (except a Kohen).

Judaism on Yibbum — From Practice to Halizah

The Torah mandates **yibbum** but provides the halizah alternative. Jewish law over the centuries has progressively preferred halizah over actual **yibbum**, with the concern that a living brother might be entering the marriage for reasons other than covenant faithfulness to his dead brother. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel formally prohibited **yibbum** in 1950, requiring halizah exclusively. The Talmudic tractate Yevamot (one of the most complex in the entire Talmud) is devoted entirely to the details of **yibbum** and halizah law, demonstrating how seriously rabbinic Judaism took this Torah obligation even as it moved toward halizah as the standard practice. The Tanakh's record confirms the law: the story of **Tamar (Beresheet (Genesis) 38)** is the background case that made the formal law necessary, and the story of **Rut** (Ruth)h and **Boaz** illustrates the broader principle of the go'el (redeemer — a kinsman-redeemer's covenant obligation to the widow of a close relative).

Islam on Levirate Marriage — Torah Principle Preserved, Compulsion Removed

Islamic law does not impose levirate marriage as an obligation. The Quran states: 'O you who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion' (An-Nisa 4:19). The compulsory aspect of **yibbum** — the requirement that the brother marry the widow whether he wishes to or not — is removed in Islamic law. However, the Torah's underlying principle is preserved: a man may marry his deceased brother's widow by mutual consent, and Islamic law explicitly permits this as a normal marriage with the widow's consent and full mahr payment. Islam does not prohibit what the Torah established as a covenant duty; it removes the compulsion while retaining the permission. The difference between Islam and Torah on this point is specifically

about compulsion: Islam requires consent; the Torah requires duty. Both systems ultimately serve the same purpose — the protection and provision of the widow.

Where Islam and Torah diverge: The Torah's **yibbum** is a covenant obligation grounded in the preservation of the dead brother's name and household. Islam's framework does not carry this specific covenant rationale — it is not concerned with preserving the dead brother's covenantal line. The deeper purpose of **yibbum** — the continuity of the **beit av**, the covenant household as a unit that persists beyond the death of the patriarch — is a specifically Hebraic covenant concept that Islam does not reproduce in the same way.

Christianity on Levirate Marriage — Abolished

Christianity abolished levirate marriage entirely, framing the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25** obligation as part of the ceremonial law of Israel that was fulfilled and set aside by the New Covenant. This is a direct departure from the Torah. The Sadducees' question to Yeshua about levirate marriage (recorded in the Gospel accounts) was designed to trap him, not to observe the Torah; but Yeshua's response — which speaks of resurrection and does not abolish the law — does not actually eliminate the levirate obligation. The subsequent history of Christianity treating levirate marriage as obsolete is a departure from Torah grounded in the theology of abrogation of the Law, which this assembly does not accept. The Torah's levirate law remains on the books. In communities where its literal practice would require rare circumstances (brothers living together, dead brother childless), the spirit of the law — the covenant community's obligation to care for the widow of a covenant brother — applies in every generation.

The Story of Tamar — Beresheet (Genesis) 38

Beresheet (Genesis) 38 records the background case that made the formal levirate law necessary. Yehudah's son Er died. His brother Onan was given **Tamar** as a levirate wife. Onan refused to produce a child that would be legally attributed to his dead brother, spilling his seed on the ground every time he had intercourse with **Tamar** — refusing the covenant duty while taking the sexual benefit of the arrangement. **Yahweh** killed Onan for this — not because of the specific act of withdrawal but because of the specific intent: denying his brother's household continuation while continuing to use **Tamar** sexually. Intent was the violation, not the method.

Tamar's subsequent act — disguising herself as a cult prostitute to obtain Yehudah's seed when he refused to give her his third son Shelah — is presented in the narrative as righteous (Yehudah himself declares 'she is more righteous than I'). Her action was not **zanah** in the condemned sense — it was a desperate covenant act to obtain the levirate right she had been denied by Yehudah's bad faith. The Torah's story itself demonstrates the principle: the widow's covenant right to the levirate provision is more important than the conventions of propriety that were being used to deny it.

41. STDs — Yahweh's Covenant Laws as a Complete Public Health System

One of the most powerful confirmations of the Torah's covenant wisdom is the direct correspondence between the sexual practices it prohibits and the sexually transmitted diseases those practices produce. The Torah's sexual framework is, among other things, a comprehensive public health system that modern medicine has spent two centuries independently confirming.

The Prohibited Practices and Their Documented Disease Risk

- Male homosexual intercourse (**Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22**): The highest-risk behavior for HIV transmission. MSM bear 43% of all US syphilis cases. WHO documents this population bears a globally disproportionate STI burden.
- Anal intercourse (**Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22** anatomical logic; Torah design of **Beresheet (Genesis) 2:24**): Thin rectal lining, no natural lubrication, fecal bacteria exposure — efficient pathways for HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, HPV, herpes, and hepatitis B.
- Bestiality (**Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:23**): Associated with zoonotic disease transmission, significant physical trauma, and documented psychological disorders.
- **Zanah** / sexual intercourse with multiple unrelated partners: Statistical linear increase in STI exposure with each additional partner. The Torah's covenant household structure — one man's designated partners exclusive to him — functions as a closed transmission network that dramatically limits STI exposure.
- Intercourse during **niddah** period (**Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:19**): The cervix is more open during menstruation and menstrual blood carries bacteria; medical research documents elevated risk of pelvic inflammatory disease for women who have intercourse during menstruation.

The Global STD Crisis as Covenant Evidence

The WHO documents more than 1 million STIs acquired every day worldwide. In 2020 alone: 129 million new chlamydia infections, 82 million new gonorrhea infections, 7.1 million new syphilis infections, 156 million new trichomoniasis infections. More than 490 million people are living with genital herpes. Approximately 300 million women carry HPV infection. Every one of these infections is transmitted through sexual practices the Torah either prohibits outright or regulates within the protective covenant structure of the household.

Three-Religion Confirmation of the Torah's Public Health Framework

All three traditions, when followed as their foundational texts direct, produce the same STD-protective outcomes as the Torah's own framework. This is because all three traditions ultimately derive their sexual ethics from the Torah, even when they do not acknowledge it.

Judaism's halakhic framework — which maintains the Torah's prohibitions on the **arayot**, the **niddah** observance, the exclusive covenant household structure, and the prohibition on **zanah** — produces a population with dramatically lower STI exposure when its practices are followed. Studies of observant Jewish communities consistently document this outcome.

Islam's framework — which prohibits sexual intercourse outside of marriage (zina), prohibits male homosexual intercourse, and structures sexual life within the covenant of nikah (marriage) — produces the same STD-protective outcomes when followed. Countries and communities where Islamic sexual ethics are practiced consistently show lower STI rates than secularized populations with no sexual framework.

Christianity's framework — when grounded in its foundational biblical texts rather than in cultural accommodation — prohibits the same practices Torah prohibits and produces the same outcomes. The historical data on sexual health in pre-sexual-revolution Western Christian societies compared to post-sexual-revolution secularized societies is not ambiguous. The abandonment of the Torah-rooted sexual framework produced the STD crisis as a predictable and measurable consequence.

The global STD crisis is not a random biological phenomenon. It is the measurable consequence of a civilization that systematically abandoned **Yahweh's** covenant sexual

framework and replaced it with the principle that any consensual act between adults is morally acceptable. The Torah said this would happen. The WHO has now quantified exactly how it happened. This is the two-or-three-witnesses standard of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** applied to public health: the consistent testimony of every major public health institution on earth over decades of systematic research all confirms what **Yahweh** said in the Torah thousands of years before they had the scientific tools to measure it.

42. The Human Sexual Response — What Happens Physiologically and What It Means Covenantally

Understanding what **Yahweh** built into the human body during sexual intercourse is covenant knowledge. The hormones, neurological responses, and physiological processes of sex are **Yahweh's** design, and understanding them explains both why He designed the covenant household as He did and why violating that framework produces the specific harms it produces.

The Four-Phase Sexual Response Cycle

Sex researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson identified the four phases of the human sexual response cycle in 1966. This framework remains the standard clinical reference:

- Phase 1 — Excitement: Heart rate and breathing increase. Blood flow to the genitals increases. The clitoris swells and the vagina begins producing natural lubrication. The penis becomes erect. Muscle tension increases throughout the body.
- Phase 2 — Plateau: Physiological changes intensify. Blood pressure rises. The vagina swells and its walls darken. The clitoris becomes highly sensitive. The testicles pull upward.
- Phase 3 — Orgasm: Sexual tension reaches its peak and releases. Intense muscle contractions occur in the vaginal walls and uterine muscles of the woman. In the man, muscles at the base of the penis rhythmically tighten and release, producing ejaculation.
- Phase 4 — Resolution: The body returns to its pre-arousal state. Breathing and heart rate slow. Muscles relax. The genitals return to their resting state.

The Covenant Hormones — Yahweh Built Bonding Into the Body

- Oxytocin — released in high quantities during sexual intercourse and especially during orgasm. Promotes trust, emotional bonding, and attachment between partners. The same hormone released during mother-infant nursing. Sex literally builds the emotional bond between husband and wife through the physical act.
- Dopamine — activated during sexual arousal, creating pleasurable sensation and building the neural association between the partner and pleasure.
- Vasopressin — released in men during and after intercourse; associated with protective and bonding behavior, contributing to the impulse to protect and remain near the woman.

These hormones explain at the neurological level why the one-flesh covenant produces the bond **Yahweh** designed it to produce. Every act of sexual intercourse between husband and wife releases the chemistry of bonding — not symbolically but biochemically. **Yahweh** built covenant faithfulness into the body's neurochemistry. Every act of sex within the covenant reinforces the bond. Every act of sex outside the covenant imprints the bonding chemistry on someone who is not the covenant partner — which is part of why sexual history before marriage makes covenant fidelity harder, not easier.

Three-Religion Parallel on the Spiritual Dimension of Marital Intimacy

All three traditions recognized, at their best, that sexual union within covenant marriage carries a spiritual dimension beyond the physical act. Judaism's kabbalistic literature describes the sexual union of husband and wife as a reflection of the union of the Shekhinah (divine presence) with Yisra'el. The Iggeret Hakodesh (13th century) teaches that the sexual union of husband and wife mirrors the divine unity above. Islam states that the Prophet declared sexual union within marriage to be an act of sadaqah (charity/worship) for which the husband is rewarded. The Quran describes husband and wife as libaas (garments) to each other (Al-Baqarah 2:187) — a profound metaphor for mutual covering, protection, and intimacy. Christianity's Puritan tradition taught that sexual intimacy within marriage was what William Gouge called 'matrimonial chastity' — the joyful covenant gift of one body to another.

All three traditions arrived at this recognition because all three inherit the Torah's own teaching: the one-flesh covenant is not merely a biological function. It is the physical expression of the deepest covenant relationship in human experience — the covenant between one man and the woman or women **Yahweh** has given him. The neurochemistry of sex confirms what the Torah says: **Yahweh** built the bonding into the act itself.

Gender Differences in the Sexual Response

- Men's sexual desire is more consistently automatic and less dependent on relational context than women's. A man can become sexually aroused more quickly and with less emotional preparation than most women require.
- Women's sexual desire is more relationally embedded. The quality of the emotional relationship, the woman's sense of being valued as a person, and the emotional safety of the environment all significantly affect female arousal.
- Men's refractory period generally increases with age; young men may have refractory periods of minutes while older men may require 12–24 hours.
- Women's capacity for multiple orgasms is well-documented — women do not have the same refractory constraint as men in most circumstances.

These differences are not weaknesses in either sex — they are complementary design features. The man's consistent readiness provides the initiating energy of the covenant sexual union. The woman's relational embeddedness ensures the covenant relationship itself is continuously renewed through acts of love and care that make her want to give herself to her husband. Both are necessary for the covenant household to thrive.

PART TEN: CONCLUSION

43. Returning to the Standard — The Torah's Complete Picture

This study has covered more ground than most people expect the Torah to cover when it comes to human sexuality. That breadth is not this study's invention — it is the Torah's own. From **Beresheet (Genesis) 1**, where **Yahweh** creates male and female and immediately commands fruitfulness and multiplication, to the detailed household regulations of *Shemot* (Exodus) and *Vayikra* (Leviticus), to the levirate laws of *Devarim* (Deuteronomy), the Torah's engagement with human sexuality is comprehensive, precise, and unapologetically frank.

The Torah does not treat sex as a necessary evil, as Christianity has historically tended to do under the influence of Platonism and Augustinian theology. It does not treat sex as a purely biological function that the will can override indefinitely, as ascetic religious culture in all three traditions sometimes suggested. And it does not treat sex as a recreational commodity that belongs to whoever wants it whenever they want it, as modern secular culture has decided. The Torah treats sex as a covenant act — the physical expression of the most fundamental human relationship — and governs it with the same precision it brings to every other domain of covenant life.

What This Study Has Established

- Sexual intercourse is defined in Torah as the one-flesh union (***echad basar***) — the joining of the male organ with the female body, as designed in **Beresheet (Genesis) 2:24**. Everything else is measured against this definition.
- Adultery (***na'aph***) is specifically the sexual intercourse of any man with a woman married to another man. The marital status of the man is legally irrelevant under Torah. A married man taking a second wife is not committing ***na'aph***.
- Polygyny is explicitly regulated but never prohibited in the Torah. Over 40 significant figures in the Tanakh had multiple wives or concubines, and **Yahweh** established His covenant with them through those household structures.
- The husband's covenant obligations to every woman in his household — ***sheer, kesut,*** and ***onah*** — are non-negotiable and legally enforceable. The covenant authority of the patriarch comes with corresponding covenant responsibility for every person under his care.
- The pilegish (concubine) is a legitimate covenant companion — not a sex slave, not a mistress. She enters through ***kiddushin***, owes her man sexual faithfulness, and is owed his provision and care in return.
- The prohibited acts (***arayot***) of **Vayikra (Leviticus) 18** — incest in all its forms, adultery, male homosexual intercourse, bestiality, intercourse during ***niddah*** — are non-negotiable covenant boundaries.
- Divorce is permitted but is a last resort, not a first response. The ***get*** is **Yahweh's** mercy for marriages that cannot be sustained. The man who uses it to casually discard his wife has covered himself with the violence **Malachi** describes.
- The Torah's sexual framework is confirmed independently by modern medicine, psychology, and the parallel teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam at their best — even when those traditions ground their confirmation in the wrong authority.

Where the Three Traditions Uphold Torah and Where They Depart — Summary

This study has applied the three-religion standard throughout. The pattern that emerges is consistent:

On the prohibitions — adultery, male homosexual intercourse, bestiality, incest — all three traditions largely uphold the Torah. Their reasoning and their authority sources differ, but their conclusions track the Torah's own. This is corroboration.

On polygyny and the concubinage institution — all three traditions have effectively suppressed what the Torah regulates. Judaism enacted the Synod of Gershom (c. 1000 CE) prohibiting polygyny for Ashkenazi Jews. Christianity prohibited it entirely under Canon Law, and Luther's famous statement that he could not forbid it from Scripture remains an uncomfortable acknowledgment for Christian theology. Islam permits polygyny (up to four wives) under specific conditions of equal treatment, which is the closest of the three traditions to the Torah's own framework. None of the three traditions fully honors the Torah's household structure as the Torah itself presents it.

On divorce — Christianity departed most severely, treating properly divorced people as perpetually sinful and trapping millions in dangerous marriages the Torah never required them to remain in. Islam maintained the most Torah-parallel structure through *talaq* and *khul'*, though with its own departures. Judaism preserved the *get* process while creating the *agunah* problem through its failure to enforce the husband's obligation to issue it.

On the wife's sexual rights — the *onah* obligation of **Shemot (Exodus) 21:10** — all three traditions underemphasized or effectively erased this Torah requirement. Islam came closest to preserving it through the nikah framework and the recognition that a husband's persistent denial of intimacy is grounds for divorce. Judaism preserved it in halakha but the practical cultural weight given to it has been insufficient. Christianity largely erased it, treating the wife's sexuality as existing for the husband's use rather than as a covenant right owed to her by the husband.

The Torah's framework — not any tradition's commentary on it — is the governing standard. This assembly teaches the Torah. Where the traditions confirm it, they are cited. Where they depart from it, the departure is named.

44. A Word to Husbands — Leading the Household in Covenant Love

If you are the *rosh beit av* — the head of the household — this study has placed a great deal of authority in your hands. The Torah gives you genuine authority over your household. It acknowledges your sexual needs as real and legitimate. It provides legal structures that allow you to have more than one woman in your household if **Yahweh** so leads. It protects your right to lead your family according to the Torah's instructions rather than society's norms.

But authority in the Torah is never naked authority. Every covenant authority in the Tanakh comes embedded in covenant responsibility. The king who takes wives and concubines must not let them turn his heart away from **Yahweh**. The patriarch who has multiple wives must not diminish any of them. The husband who exercises his headship must fulfill the *onah*, the *sheer*, and the *kesut* to every woman in his household without exception. These are not optional qualifications on the authority — they are the conditions under which the authority is granted.

All three traditions, at their best, confirm this. Islam's Ibn al-Qayyim stated that forcing a wife into sexual intercourse constitutes abuse carrying legal punishment. The Puritan Gouge taught that a husband must give his wife 'due benevolence' with 'good will and delight, willingly, readily, and cheerfully.' The Talmud declared that the man who does not court his wife before approaching her is like a rooster with less manners than a bird. What **Yahweh** built into the Torah — the

husband's covenant obligation to the woman he covers — has been confirmed across all three traditions even when their application of it has been inconsistent.

The man who reads this study and concludes that the Torah has given him license to treat women as instruments for his gratification has not understood the Torah. He has understood one layer — the permission — while ignoring the weight — the obligation. The covenant household **Yahweh** designed is not a structure for one person's comfort. It is a structure for the covenant flourishing of every person within it. A patriarch who builds that household with genuine love, honest provision, and consistent covenant faithfulness is living the covenant life the Torah was given to produce.

45. A Word to Wives — Understanding What Yahweh Actually Built

If you are a woman in a covenant household — a wife or a concubine — this study has placed before you a picture of the relationship you are in that is likely very different from what you were taught to expect.

You were not taught that your husband's sexual desire for you is a covenant obligation he owes you. You were not taught that if he is withholding from you, you have covenant recourse. You were not taught that the Torah treats your sexual needs as legitimate and legally protected. You were not taught that the **onah** obligation was described by Professor Nahum Sarna as 'the only instance in the laws of the ancient Near East that stipulates a wife is legally entitled to sexual gratification.' You were taught that wives serve their husbands' needs. The Torah teaches that husbands serve their wives' needs.

Islam comes closer to acknowledging this than most people realize. Islamic jurists established that a husband who persistently withholds intimacy from his wife is failing a covenant obligation, and that this failure is grounds for her to seek dissolution of the marriage through **khul'**. The Prophet's hadith establishes that the husband's body belongs to his wife as her right, not merely as his privilege. The parallel to the Torah's **onah** obligation is direct. Where Islam confirms Torah here, it is cited as corroboration.

You have the right to your husband's presence, his provision, his protection, and his sexual faithfulness in fulfilling the **onah** obligation to you. If he is not providing these things, the Torah gives you recourse — not to dissolve the household unilaterally, but to bring the covenant obligation to the attention of the community's leadership and hold him accountable to the standard **Yahweh** set. The covenant household is not designed to minimize you. It is designed to cover you — to provide a structure of love, provision, and protection within which you can flourish as the woman **Yahweh** made you to be.

46. A Word to Those Who Have Been Hurt by These Subjects

There are people who have read this study who carry real wounds from the subjects it covers. You may have been in a marriage that ended in betrayal and divorce. You may have been in a polygynous household where the experience was not the covenant ideal this study describes but something much more painful. You may have been the first wife whose husband took a second woman without care, communication, or covenant faithfulness. You may have experienced sexual abuse within what was supposed to be a covenant relationship. You may have grown up in a home broken by sexual betrayal and now struggle to trust any framework that seems to normalize anything other than the monogamous ideal.

This study acknowledges your pain directly. The Torah's permission for polygyny does not guarantee that every multiple-wife household will be characterized by love, fairness, and covenant faithfulness. The Torah's regulation of the pilegish does not guarantee that every concubinage arrangement will honor the woman's dignity and needs. The Torah gives the framework. Human beings live within that framework with all their selfishness, weakness, and capacity for harm.

All three traditions confirm this reality. Islam acknowledges that a man who cannot treat multiple wives with absolute equality should marry only one (Al-Nisa 4:3). Judaism's Talmud acknowledges that the husband who sheds his wife's tears brings divine consequence upon himself (Sanhedrin 22a). Christianity's Puritan tradition acknowledged that a husband who treats his wife as a servant rather than a covenant companion has violated the sacred calling of his headship. All three traditions, at their best, confirm that the covenant framework exists to protect women, not to harm them.

What this study asks of you is not that you immediately feel at peace with every subject it has covered. It asks that you separate two distinct questions: 'What does the Torah actually say?' and 'Was the Torah violated in what happened to me?' These are different questions. Someone violating the Torah in how they treated you does not invalidate the Torah's framework. It confirms that the Torah's framework exists because without it human beings harm each other — and that violations of the framework are exactly what produce the harm.

The same Torah that regulated multiple-wife households also required that every woman in the household be fed, clothed, and sexually provided for. The husband who did not do that violated the Torah. The framework itself provides more protection, not less, for every woman in the covenant household than any alternative the world has offered. When that framework is honored as **Yahweh** gave it, the covenant household is a place of genuine blessing for every person within it.

He has told you, O man, what is good. And what does **Yahweh** require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your **Elohim**? —Michah 6:8

The covenant household **Yahweh** designed is built on those three pillars: justice for every person within it, loving-kindness as the spirit of every interaction, and humility before **Yahweh** as the standard by which every decision is measured. When those three things are present, the Torah's household structure — in all its complexity and all its covenantal depth — is a place of genuine blessing. May **Yahweh** grant every household the wisdom to build it that way.

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End of the Complete Study

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Parts One through Ten — Complete

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Peace and Blessings