

The Woman's Place – In the Ancient World and in Scripture

Matthew Vander Els • 2014-11-25 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 25:21](#) • [Numbers 27](#) • [Deuteronomy 22](#) • [Deuteronomy 24](#) • [Psalms 128](#) • [Colossians 3:18](#) • [Genesis 2:18](#) • [Hebrews 11:7](#) • [Acts 16](#) • [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) • [Proverbs 31](#)

Isaac's Prayer for Rebecca

This week, anyone read this week's Torah portion? There is a very, very, very convicting verse in this week's Torah portion. We're going to touch on that a little bit later. But I'm sure you guys, number one topic everyone loves to write a commentary about is when Isaac prayed for his wife, Rebecca. He prayed on her behalf, and she conceived. That's a very convicting verse because I pray for my wife, but sometimes I don't put a lot of effort into it. I admit that. Sometimes when we go into bed at night, we say the Shema and fall asleep. Isaac knew of the importance of praying for his wife. Not that she couldn't pray for herself. She knew her own needs. But what was it about her that convicted him that says, I need to intercede for my wife today? And when he did, she became pregnant.

We know that Abraham was given the blessing that his seed would be as the stars in the sky, as the sand in the sea, right? And we know that Isaac had that same blessing. We know that Rebekah was going to have children according to the covenant that God made with Abraham, but she was barren. Why did God wait until Isaac prayed to allow Rebekah to conceive?

The rabbinic commentary in the Mishnah states that God yearns to hear the prayers of the righteous. He yearns to hear it. Not that he's not going to bless you, but he yearns to hear you petition. He yearns to have you come before him and humbly say, my king, oh gracious and merciful king, will you beseech me this day in my request?

And so that kind of started me on a journey to talk about women. Without them, we would not be here today, right? And so the more I started to study, the more I realized that this topic was huge. I looked at 20 different essays from different scholars from around the country, books—I

skimmed through quite a few books this week—and I started to realize that we have a type of stereotype of the ancient world and how women were treated. And I hope that at the end of this study, the place of a woman will be more defined, at least in the ancient world.

The Place of Women in Scripture

We hear men sometimes get agitated with their wives or whatnot, and they make these horrible remarks like, "I'm going to put her in her place," right? Oh, Matt, don't you step in the landmines. Don't step there. Put her in her place. When men say this—not that any of us men have ever thought of saying that—when men say this, what are we really saying? According to scripture, according to history, and according to the culture of the ancient world, what are we truly saying?

You see, most in today's society view the Near East and even the first century as a time when women were oppressed. We read the letters of Paul mainly, and we see, wow, what a chauvinistic culture. Is this cultural? Some scholars would say yes, absolutely. Women were a lesser being than men. They were not honored. They were not valued. Is this biblical? Some scholars would say, absolutely, it's biblical. We read this all through scripture. But if this is the case, the female, the bride, what does that say about the bride of Messiah? I would say us. If the bride was oppressed, if the bride was not honored, if the bride was this lesser oppressive being in culture and in scripture, what does that say about the bride of Messiah, the bride of Christ?

The Tale of Two Brothers

I want to start out with two brothers. The tale of two brothers. And I need three volunteers to do this. Preferably two of them are married. Yeah? I need one more man. One more man? Troy! Oh, you guys are in the next one. Don't worry. Come on up, come on up, come on up.

So I have a script. And this story is of course called "The Tale of Two Brothers." Let's see here. I want you, sir, to be... Hmm? You got it? You okay?

So what, what—no, you're not the wife. Where's my script? Where's my script? There we go.

Me and... So you are this guy. Now the character name, what's your character name? Hold on. Oh yeah, you got a mic and everything. How do you say that name there? This is your... What? Anpu? Okay, that works. And your name? Character name. Wife? There you go. And you, sir, are? Bata. Bata. She doesn't have a name. Good.

So, this is a story about two brothers and one of them was married. Now in this specific story, the wife is actually married to Anpu. But the reason why I want Brad to be the brother is because at the end of the script I want to see... I'll show you. So in this story, you have the older brother, which is? Bata? Actually, nope, it's Anpu, sorry. We have the older brother, Anpu. And Anpu takes care of his younger brother, Bata. He allows him to sleep in his household. He takes care of him as a son, the story goes on to say. And Bata is very gracious. He works for his brother. He serves his brother. He plows the fields. He yokes the cattle and so on and so forth. And we're just going to start straight into the story. So now at the time of plowing, his elder brother—and Anpu said to the younger brother, and then you read that, just that section. Yep, go.

"Let us make ready for ourselves a goodly yoke of oxen for plowing, for the land has come out from the water. It is fit for plowing. Moreover, do thou come to the field with corn, for we will begin the plowing in the morrow morning. Thus said he to him, and his younger brother did all these things that his older brother had spoken. And when the morning had come, they went out to the field. Both of them went out to the field with their things, and their hearts were pleased exceedingly with their tasks in the beginning of their work. And it came to pass after this that they were in the field, and they stopped to plant corn."

And then... Go quickly. Bring us corn. Bring to us corn. So Bata—exactly. They needed corn to plant. So Bata runs back home to his brother's house.

And Bata found the wife of his elder brother there, and she was sitting there doing her hair. Get this on camera, sitting there doing her hair, dramatic. Yeah, doing your thing. And then Bata said to the wife of his older brother, very sternly, right?

"Get up and get me the corn that I can take back to the field for Anpu. My older brother rushed me. Do it now and do not delay."

"Go get it yourself. Go open the bin and take all that you need. Can you not see I'm doing my hair? I do not want to drop the locks of hair while I dress them."

And so the youth went into the stable, and he took a large measure of corn, as much as he desired to take, and he loaded it with the wheat and the barley, and he went back out carrying it to his brother, and they planted the corn.

No, no, no, we'll just put it back.

So, guys, please give a round of applause for Mickey, Brad, and Jenny. I'm getting used to this. I might hold on to the mic. I love it. I'll get you up here to sing later if you like.

"Matt, that was a really boring play. Why would you get them up there?" Because I wanted to demonstrate something.

3,200 Years of Independence

You see, this story was written 1200 BCE. What is that? 3,200 years ago in the 19th dynasty of the new kingdom of Egypt. We just acted out a story that was over 3,000 years old.

Now the story is a lot longer. The story actually ends up kind of replicating the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife because right after this, the wife starts to try to take advantage of the younger brother and then he runs out to the field with his older brother and the older brother wants to kill him because the wife said he tried to—so on and so forth. We're only going to get into that.

What I wanted to emphasize here is 3,200 years ago, how women reacted to man's authority over them. We always think that men were so oppressive to women and they controlled women and everything that you say they would do. "Woman, get me some corn." "Get it yourself." I about dropped the book when I was reading this. 3,200 years old, women were still independent in their decisions. But I thought men were supposed to be over women. Well, in a context, yes, but it was not an oppressive time period for women. Even in the ancient world, it wasn't.

Women's Rights and Inheritance

You see, most women in the ancient Near East were relatively very respected. In earlier ancient Near Eastern periods, women had equal rights as men concerning appearing in public, making legal decisions, owning property, etc., etc., even acquiring inheritance from their fathers. We read this in [Numbers 27](#).

When Zelophehad, a man by the name of Zelophehad, he only had daughters. And he ended up dying in the wilderness, right? After Sinai. And his daughters came to the elders and to Moses and said, "Listen, we don't have any brothers, but we want the inheritance, the land, when we go into the land, the parcel of land that's going to be given to our father—we want it."

All right? Man, I didn't think women could obtain an inheritance. I thought that was for the older son of the family. Right? No. No. It could go to women and that's exactly what happened. God said, "Okay, you can give them that piece of land."

And then all the elders, after they went into the land, all the elders got upset. They're like, "Well, what if these women marry someone from another tribe? Now this piece of land in Manasseh will go to Simeon or Levi..." Not Levi. "Simeon or Naphtali or something." And so they made another judgment. "Okay guys, you can have this property, but you must marry a man within the tribe of Manasseh. That way it will stay within the tribe and so on and so forth."

But I start discovering these things, and I find it fascinating.

In Ur, everybody say Ur, Ur, U-R. This is the country or the kingdom that Abraham was originally from. They found something called the pit of death, what they call the pit of the dead. And it was when a priestess had died and was buried. The community respected this woman so much that they also found 10 men with their weapons fully armored in the grave with her and 68 women—ankle bracelets, chains, necklaces, makeup, or what was left of makeup—chains, everything, also in the grave with her. These people committed suicide so that they could be with this woman of status and usher her into the afterlife as they viewed it. This is the status of women in the ancient Near East. Fertility goddesses were worshipped more than the male gods. If a woman comes from a rich family, indeed she is highly respected. It's interesting because the biggest contrast in rights for women was between social classes. It actually wasn't between genders. You see, the poor were not respected and the rich were respected.

Amazing how some things do not change. This is why when God spoke to the children of Israel, he said, listen guys, everybody will pay a temple tax of a half shekel. Not more, not less. Everybody will be equal in this. You know why we wear the tassels, the tzitzit, tzitzio? See, in the Near East, tekelet, the blue, was very expensive. Very expensive. And the only people that wore tassels were the elites. Now, Israel wasn't the only one that wore tassels—they wore them in Babylon, they wore them in the Hittite kingdom at Hattusa. It was kind of like a status that you'd wear in the hem of your garment. So only priests or maybe princes or kings or governors or just rich folk, these elites, when they walked into a room you'd see their tassels. "Ooh, hello sir." Can you imagine all of Israel walking into a foreign kingdom? Everybody has them. Everybody is an elite. Everybody is a priest. Everybody has an equal high status in God's kingdom. It's a teaching on its own.

Equal Status in God's Kingdom

But that was the biggest contrast. Women could run businesses, own land, become queens. It's interesting because do you know what they called a female priest in the Near East? See, in the pagan lands, when you prayed to your god and made sacrifices, that would bring you blessing.

So if you could have someone praying for you and sacrificing for you all day long on your behalf, then you would always have blessing. So if you had a lot of daughters, you'd pick one: "You will be a priestess." They literally called them nuns. They would never be married, and they would spend their entire life in the temple of a pagan deity, making sacrifices and praying for their family. You see, we have manuscripts and letters of nuns complaining about this, very disgruntled. "My father chose me to be a nun. Now I'm not going to have any kids, I'm not going to have a family. I've got to sit here and kill animals all day and make prayers all day long for my family." But they had a status; they were well respected.

In Greater Mesopotamia, girls were typically married very, very young. Boys married just a little bit older. You see, prime marriage age for a girl was somewhere between 14 and 20 years old. That's really young, Matthew. I mean, post-puberty is time for marriage. That's how they viewed it. It's very logical. The males were probably roughly between 26 and 32 years old when they got married. Much older. Maybe even older than that. This is why many scholars believe that when Miriam married, she was pregnant with Yeshua? Very young, probably a teenager—without a doubt, most likely 14, 15, or 16 years old. And we know that Joseph died long before she did. That's why—because in the culture, women were married off younger.

The Marriage Covenant

You see, in that culture, the husband had some choice in choosing his bride, but it was up to the father of the bride to orchestrate everything. In the ancient way of marriage, the covenant was between a man and a woman, but it was emphasized between the two families. What I mean by that is, you, sir, if you're going to marry your daughter to someone, you are responsible for working out the marriage contract, not her. You're responsible for working out the details of what happens if she can't bear children, what happens if you guys do end up divorcing each other, what she gets and what you get, what happens if you don't give her shelter and food and clothing. Can she divorce you? And if she does, what can she take with her?

Divorce in the Near East is a hot topic. I may have some slides, but I'll go ahead and talk about it now. Everyone thinks that because [Deuteronomy 24](#) speaks of divorce and it only talks about the man's side of it, that—oh, the Bible says that men can divorce women, but women can never get a divorce. Guys, the scriptures, and this may be heresy I'm fixing to say, okay? The Bible did not come with a commentary. People knew the context of scripture. We still have the text, but we don't have the full commentary that backed it. Scripture was given to a people who already knew their culture and could apply everything to it.

Women could leave their husbands. And when they did, they weren't poor. We're reading Mesopotamian and Hittite divorce letters. And it's very interesting because the man typically was left with nothing, especially if they bore children. Most of the time, he would either have to pay her all of his money or leave her with the house or both. What? Things haven't changed at all, have they? No. And when a woman was divorced, she was known as a widow. Your husband didn't have to die to divorce you. In fact, a spouse dying is synonymous with divorce.

Women's Rights in Scripture

This is why in [Romans 7](#), Paul talks about a woman being bound to her husband as long as he's alive, but when he dies, she's released from the marriage. But that's nowhere found in the Torah. The Torah states that if there's an uncleanness—which we'll cover in another teaching—that signifies an adulterous perversion within the marriage, the husband can leave the wife. It doesn't mention them dying and leaving each other. What Paul's saying is synonymous. In oral tradition, you're dead to me if you divorce. And so it's very interesting.

See, if you were going to marry off your daughter, the husband would have to pay you for your daughter. Pay me? Yeah, yeah. It is your most valuable possession that you have ever owned. In fact, in the ancient Assyrian language, the abstract words for marriage are *emutum* and *hatanutum*. I made that sound like I really knew how to pronounce that, didn't I? They indicate that a man, the groom—*hatanum*—enters into a family relationship with the male person of the other family, the *emum*. The term for marriage, the root words in the ancient Assyrian language—not necessarily Hebrew but Assyrian—signified a relationship between two men: the father of the bride and the groom. The wife or the future wife was the passive object of the transaction.

Women, I'm not saying you're an object. You're the most precious object; you're the absolute most precious object of your father. Can you imagine? Many of you saw my post about Levon Simeon going into Shechem. If you don't know the story, I can fill in the details. Anyway, there was a girl named Dinah, and she was a teenager. It says that she went away from her family to party with all the ladies of the foreign land. So Jacob's there. He has 11, 12 sons and a daughter. And she goes away from their family. It was a very taboo thing to do for the women to leave their families. You see, women had jobs, but for the most part, they were always under the responsibility of their fathers and their brothers. And so most of the time, the women would go to the well to fetch water and such, but beyond that, it was very dangerous for a woman to leave her family.

Dinah and Virginity as Property

And regardless, Dinah, it seems, is a little rebellious. She leaves her family to go party with the pagans. And while she's partying, Shechem, the prince of the town, sees her, and Scripture says that he laid with her and shamed her. He did not rape her. The Hebrew word used elsewhere in Scripture for rape is not used here. He laid with her, and because he laid with her, he shamed her. In Scripture, virginity was something precious, and it was part of the transaction of marriage. You see, a woman in the ancient world was under the responsibility of her father, and that responsibility was shifted to her husband—the transaction of responsibility. "You will take care of this daughter of mine. She will be your wife. You will hold her as the most important item in your entire life."

Matt, I'm glad we don't do that anymore. My father doesn't pass me off as an object in a wedding. The giving away of a bride—we don't carry that tradition forward anymore, do we? But the virginity was the father's responsibility to give away. It wasn't the daughters' responsibility. In the culture, it was the fathers. That was his choice: "This man will be your husband." And Scripture even tells us about this in Deuteronomy. If a man lies with another woman without getting permission from the father and it's discovered, he has to pay the bride price. He stole. He stole something from another man. He stole his daughter, the most valuable possession ever. And Scripture says that he must now reimburse him whatever the father wants. \$100,000. You better take a loan out, boy. And he must marry her. And he must take care of her. And he must honor her. And he must esteem her.

And he must give her shelter, food, whatever she wants for the rest of his life because he stole. So Dinah goes out and Shechem lays with her. Now you see, if you have a daughter in the ancient world, because of this idea, if your daughter was not a virgin before she got married, it was a shameful thing. Not necessarily for her, but for the father. This is how he takes care of his family. This is how responsible he is for his family. And so when it says that Shechem laid with her, that was why it was shameful. It was a shameful thing because he stole something at that point in time, and Jacob was shamed.

After the fact, it says Shechem couldn't stop thinking about this girl. Oh, I like this girl. My heart is attached to her.

Shechem's Transgression

So he goes to his father, Hamer. Hey, Dad, I stole something. I wasn't supposed to do this, but we've got to make it right. We've got to go approach Jacob, and we've got to give him whatever

he wants for this woman. I love her. Okay? I love her. So they approach Jacob, and Jacob's distraught. This poor man, shamed. His honor was now shamed. So they work something out.

Hamer offers him this huge bride price. The bride price is there to restore the honor back to Jacob. He'll make money, and then his daughter will be married, and the whole thing never happened. Her brothers were upset by this because Shechem shamed their family. Should he treat our sister as a whore, they said? And so they talked the men of the city into circumcising themselves. It's our custom that you guys got to get circumcised. It was not their custom for the pagans to get circumcised. That was an honored ritual within the Hebrew people. They lowered that ritual down to apply to pagans for a type of revenge.

The Slaying of the City

And on the third day, after all these men had made the agreement, Jacob's honor is restored because his daughter, assuming pregnant, but doesn't have to be, now has a husband. They go into the city, these two teenagers, Levi and Simeon, and they slay the entire town. Guys, this used to be my favorite story because I'm always on their side. I'm like, yeah! Yeah! Teenagers. Yeah, they weren't old little kids. The rabbis say that there are 600 men in that city that they slay. A lot of people are like, yeah, but they kind of cheated because they'd just been circumcised.

You can swing a sword back at these two little teenagers. Come on, right? These teens overtook the city. And when Jacob heard about it, he was distraught. Levi apparently was a little repentant, but Simeon was not. And Jacob scolded Simeon. You have shamed me more so than they did by taking your sister. Why? Because Jacob honored an agreement. He was in a contract and Simeon and Levi made the name of their father dirt because of this.

The Real Victim Is Jacob

So the real victim in all this is Jacob. Now he has a daughter that is no longer a virgin. She doesn't have a husband now because his sons killed him and he made a contract and his family, his name on that contract was thrown in the mud. Poor guy. I say that to demonstrate the value of women in the ancient Near East.

You see, I used to teach this actually, and I still do for the teens, that marriage begins at consummation, right? When sex. I used to teach this. I still do for teens. Once you do that, you're married. Hold off. But in the ancient Near East, sex was not the marriage. It was when

the agreement was made. When the object is passed, when the ownership responsibility is passed on to another man, that's when you're married.

Marriage: Covenant Over Consummation

Isaac and Rebecca, Rebecca was his wife before she came, betrothed wife, his responsibility. Remember Mary and Joseph? They hadn't done it yet, right? But when she became pregnant, he said, I'm going to have to put her away. Why would he have to put away someone he's not married to? They were already in covenant with each other. He was responsible for her.

In ancient Assyrian law, a man would have to start the marriage proposals, not with the father, but with the mother-in-law. You would approach her first. First. In Assyrian law, okay? Israel's a little bit different. Other kings were a little bit different. But I want to demonstrate to you guys how we view marriage and women in the ancient Near East is a little bit different than what it really was.

How about slander against your wife? Man, we don't talk about our women when they're not around, do we? Wives, when we're out with the guys. We always have nice things to say about them, right? Even when we're having a fight. I saw a couple guys. [Deuteronomy 22](#) has a section of protecting the woman from this very thing. If any man take a wife and go into her and hate her, he doesn't like her, okay? Has a problem. Maybe she pesters him or something. I don't know. Bad cook. Who knows? And gives occasion of speech against her and brings up an evil name upon her and say, I took this woman and when I came into her, I found out she was not a virgin.

The Law Against Slander

Then shall the father of the girl and her mother take and bring forth the tokens of virginity unto the elders of the city of the gate. And the girl's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter to this man to wife and he hated her. And lo! He has given occasion of speech against her, saying, "I found not that your daughter is a virgin, "and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. "And they shall spread the cloth before the elders "of the city, and the elders of the city shall take "that man and chastise him, and they shall immerse him "in 100 shekels of silver." He has to pay 100 shekels of silver, which is weight of silver. "And give it unto the father of the girl, "because he has brought up an evil name "upon the virgin of Israel.

So, to recap. If a man does not like his wife and he starts to talk badly about her amongst the city, then a trial will be held. For example, if he says she wasn't a virgin, that our contract was

she would be a virgin, she wasn't a virgin when I married her, and so now I'm talking bad about her. This isn't saying that she actually is or isn't. The emphasis on this story is a man talking and slandering his wife.

And so the father will bring forth the tokens of virginity. Another teaching. Let's just say the father had proof and leave it at that. The father will bring forth the evidence that his daughter was a virgin. And then, if he presents the evidence and says, look, this guy just doesn't like who he married. And now he's wanting to get out of it somehow. Divorce her or something.

So the elders of the city will charge him 100 shekels of silver paid to the father, and he can never divorce her for the rest of his life. Of course, if she's found guilty, if the covenant that the father made with him is not true, then the girl is killed. Where is she killed? Where is she stoned? Father's house. His responsibility. So guys, don't talk badly about your wives. She was given to you as a possession. You're under contract. When you got married, you're under contract to take care of her. That is her place in your life. Simple dislike for a wife is not grounds for a divorce.

The Pharisees Reinterpreting Divorce

You see, the Pharisees in [Deuteronomy 24](#). It speaks about the laws for divorce. And there's a debate about what the grounds for divorce are. It talks about this: if a man finds an unclean thing, it could be translated unclean word, but an unclean thing in his wife, then he can divorce her and so on and so forth.

And of course, from what we know in the ancient world, we have commentaries and all the surrounding nations, that unclean thing was a perversion. Kind of like adultery, but anything that's perversion-like, whether it's with another man, whether it's inside the household, man can divorce her. This is why Yeshua talks about adultery being the only grounds, it's perversion, sexual perversion is the only grounds for divorce.

Well the Pharisees, by the time of the first century, they started getting really liberal with "finding an unclean thing," and they stated that if your wife burnt your breakfast, you could divorce her. This is how out of whack, this is what guys do, right? We're like, well, that word probably doesn't mean that. She burnt my toast! No, this is not the way of the ancient world. Once you're in covenant, you're stuck. Hopefully it's a good thing, right? You're in it for the long haul.

Marriage: A Covenant for Strengthening

Marriage was always meant to be a strengthening of a single person into a complete being via another person. That's what marriage was always supposed to be, always. We talk about [Psalms 128](#). [Psalms 128](#), very cool, cool passage of scripture. It states, blessed are all who fear the Lord. The word all is everyone, kol in Hebrew, who walk in obedience to him. You will eat the fruit of your labor. Blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Yes, this will be pleasing for the man who fears Yahweh.

And so there's a scholarly debate about the context of this verse, that verse one, all, is really only applying to men. Blessed are the men who fear Yahweh. Why? Because the rest of the verse talks about your wife will be fruitful and blessed. In the last verse, blessed is the man who fears God. Look at the blessings of this. I find this awesome. Look at the blessings. Blessed are, let's just say, kol is men. Blessed are the men who fear God. What is the blessing? Their wives will be fruitful. Their wives will be happy. Their wives will bear children. Their wives will be blessed. Not on their own account. If the man fears God, then the wife benefits from it.

There Is a Hierarchy

If the man fears God, if the man is going to walk in righteousness, then it's a trickle-down effect. The blessings go down to his family. That's why it's so important, guys. There is a hierarchy. There is a hierarchy in the household, right? The men serve God, right? And the women are the responsibility under the men, the children under the women. This is why I hammer the topic of men stepping up and being the spiritual leader in their house, because that's the order, right? of how things are supposed to be.

Not that a woman can't. I meet many families where if a man is not willing to step up in the position to lead his family spiritually, the wife will. Or if you're single, wife can. And it's funny because most of the time the wife will do a better job at leading the family spiritually than the husband. But that's not her job. It shouldn't be her responsibility. That's the responsibility of the husband who paid the bride price, who guaranteed to her father that he would take care of her.

Now we know that women can fear God too—the woman of valor, blessed woman who fears Yahweh, we know that—but the context of [Psalms 128](#) is men. It's your job to have that responsibility in the household alongside your wife. You're supposed to be leading.

The Vine Within the House

See, there's another debate on [Psalms 128](#) where it talks about your wife will be like a fruitful vine within the house. Within the house? What do you mean within the house? Well, David Kimhi, a medieval Jewish sage, spoke about what that meant. Of course, think about the time period that they're in. This guy's writing, right? Middle Ages. She is compared to a vine in this verse because vines were sometimes planted inside of a house. I cannot find any evidence of that, but regardless... As it grew, it would grow towards the aperture of the home, and the vine would exit outside while the root is firmly planted inside. So too should a woman be firmly planted inside the house, not go outside. You're supposed to be in the house, barefoot and pregnant.

Horrible, right? Isn't that how we see some men act in society? Not even allowed to go outside. You're supposed to be firmly planted within the house. That's what you're supposed to be doing.

It's interesting because Professor Briggs reevaluated the situation at the turn of the century, and he says that evidence shows the innermost room in the house, which is what that Hebrew word in the house represents, was the most sacred. It housed the dinner table. Therefore, [Psalms 128](#) is speaking of the wife centered with the existence of the home and the family without her constant presence would collapse.

If a man is righteous, if a man fears God, then his wife will be firmly planted in the sacred innermost core of the house with the children and with you around the table where you meet for meals. And without her, you would have no family. Your family, your household, everything would collapse.

Understanding Submission

I want to do another skit. Jay and Jennifer, this would be great. Did any women bring rocks because they thought that this teaching was going to go really bad really quick? Where is... This is for you. And this is for you. We need microphones. Scooch over this way a little bit. Scooch over, scooch over.

So what I would like, oh, this is going to be great. So we know [Colossians 3:18](#) says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your husband. Submit to your husband in all things. Amen." So, Jay, I would like you to tell Jennifer to submit to you with passion. Submit to me, woman. And Jennifer, as you can see, just tell us how that makes you feel here. I don't know what I write there. Respond with however you feel about that. How do you feel about that? We can edit the video. It's okay.

So I took a look at that word submit, and according to Vine's Expository Dictionary, submit—the Greek word submit—does mean to submit in a military situation. When you submit to like the general, the troops submit, rally together. But in non-military circumstances, I mean, sometimes it looks like a war, marriage, right? But it's not supposed to be. It's not a military engagement. In non-military use, it was a voluntary attitude of cooperating, assuming responsibility, and assisting in carrying a burden.

So, sir, you have a folded over section. If you could just read that with this new enlightenment of this definition.

"Honey, would you please help me carry the burden of this household as my helpmate?"

Give them a round of applause, please. This is great. No one died.

Helpmate. Wives. Wives. Be a helpmate to your husbands. Carry the burden, help them carry the burden of your household.

A Hierarchy of Responsibility

There is a hierarchy. It's a hierarchy of responsibility. Some would say ownership in the English language, responsibility. The husband is responsible for the wife. The wife is the prime responsibility for the children. And the husband owes responsibility to God.

One thing that I read, a rabbi once said, was that based on [Psalms 128](#), there is a type of engagement between being righteous to God, fearing God, and your spouse and your wife, right? How many of you guys know that when you were divorced, if you ever got divorced or if your husband ever died, women, do you know what would happen to you? You could, if you were wealthy enough, which if you're divorced, most of the time you were, you would go out and you would establish your own household. You might buy a field. You might do all kinds of stuff and live your own life. But typically, you would return to your father's house. You would return to the man who was responsible for you before you went.

I know what some of you guys are thinking. Matt, I'm single or I'm divorced or I'm widowed. This whole teaching's about marriage and women. How does this apply to me? Because the same situation applies to you. If you do not have a spouse, if you do not have a husband, you're supposed to return to the covering and the responsibility of your father. My father has been dead for a long time. Of the father, you see. There's still a covering. There's still a responsibility for you.

Anyway, this rabbi made the connection. He says, so if a man fears God, then his wife will be joyful, happy, blessed. What happens if he doesn't? He states that there are many times when men come to me for counseling, and he says, "My wife is just, ugh, I cannot stand her." So Scripture says, "Better to live at the corner of your roof than in the house with a contentious woman."

"Rabbi, what do I?"

The rabbi looks at him and says, "How your wife treats you in the relationship is how you treat God in that relationship." It's a reflection. Now, whether you agree with that or not, I find it very convicting. I become upset in the household. Instantly I reflect, is this how I treat God? Self-examine first. Maybe this is God trying to teach me a lesson in this? When was the last time I tried to be a helpmate for God? Tried to share responsibility with my Father.

Just interesting.

Genesis 2:18 and the Helpmate

Genesis 2:18, and the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate, helpmate." She helps, she helps here and there and so on and so forth.

My wife stays at home or she works or she makes sure the house is clean. She takes care of the kids. That's not what this is saying. See, that word for helpmate is *azer kinegdo*. *Azer kinegdo*. Tongue-tied today. *Azer* is a military term. It means to offer aid, support, help, protection in a military sense. It's a backup, if you will.

Anybody ever play paintball? Airsoft? One, two, two. Really? There it comes out. Love some paintball. Got into airsoft. Airsoft's really cool. It doesn't hurt nearly as much, which some people like, but the guns look a lot real and you don't have to wear a full mask.

BBs, basically. And so you're out in the woods, because we're not playing speedball typically. We're out in the woods, 45-minute games, and you get lost. I'm going to be a scout. I'm going to be a sniper with my little paintball gun. It was always cool to be a sniper and roll around. My barrel's an 18-inch barrel instead of your 16. I'm that much more accurate. No one got that. Okay, never mind.

So you'd be crawling around to the ground. You're right. And you'd be here, pa-pa-pa-pa-pa. Here are people overhead. No one sees me. Ha! I'm all alone. I'm the scout sniper. Do-do-do-do. Even got a red dot in my paintball gun. That thing shoots 50 feet. I got a red dot scope on it.

Sneak up to a base. I'm gonna get this guy—see someone walking around the base, red dot, here we go, gotcha! Paintball flies so straight. And then a gust of wind blows and it misses my target. He sees me. Yells down and all 10 guys at the base: "Hey! Over there! Alone!" Oh snap! Behind a tree. Paintballs flying past you, lighten you up. I could really need some help here. I could really use some help. And then your best boy was flanking the base when you weren't looking and he attacks them, draws the fire off so you can escape and gain more cover.

Help is their mate. Literally, that's what it's talking about. It's talking about women. A helpmate is someone who is going to fight to protect your husband. It's not cleaning the kitchen, it's not helping out the house, it's not homeschooling the kids, it's not getting another job, it's to protect your husband, especially when he gets pinned down.

Equal Counterpart

Kinegdo means corresponding to, counterpart, or equal in matching. "I will make you a helpmate. I will make you someone who will have the strength and the defense to be able to help you in any situation that is equal to you."

Kinegdo, equal counterpart. Women are not the same as men, but I would argue, according to Hebrew, it was meant to be an equal strength component within the marriage. Ma'ezer kinegdo. This week's Torah portion, [Genesis 25, 21](#).

And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren, and the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah, his wife, conceived. This is possibly one of the most convicting verses I have ever read in Scripture. We read a lot of verses that talk about my righteousness being as filthy rags. Yeah, it is. I am a sinner. Yeah, all lost sheep. Yeah, I'm a lost sheep. I have sinned.

Isaac prayed for his wife on her behalf, and she conceived. How often do I pray for my wife? I do quite a bit. But I'll be honest, sometimes I just don't think about it. Jenny, we were going to bed the other night. We always sing Shema, or say the Shema before we go to sleep. And typically after Shema, we say a little prayer, and then we go to bed. Anna said Shema was tired and just went to bed. She woke me up, shook me, and prayed for me. Okay, I will pray for you.

Isaac prayed for his wife. Was she going to conceive? Yeah, she was going to. That was part of the blessing. But it was his responsibility to make sure that he petitioned for the blessings of his wife. She could do it alone. We see this all through Scripture. Hannah did it alone, whispered.

Husbands, if you're married, it is your responsibility to petition the Father for the blessings in your life. It's your job. Men, that is your job as a husband. Because not just any father passes the most valuable possession in the world to you—my father-in-law did, and not just him. In Judaism they believe that all marriages, typically, are two souls that were matched in heaven and then came down and grew up. That mysticism I don't believe, but I like the idea, because how many of you know that the Father pre-plans the steps that you're going to take in life? How many of you know that God has a journey for you and you end up finding out about it as soon as you're fixing to take the next step?

The Father's Plan for Your Life

"What? This is this door?" "This door is the one that's gonna open?" "I wanted that door to open. I'm not going through this door. I wanna knock on this door. Open this door." So you walked through the door. The Father made sure that you were equipped to be responsible for your wife. Are you living up to that responsibility?

Everyone thought that this teaching was gonna be about women. It's the men. If a woman is divorced or a widow, then guess whose responsibility it is to take care of them? The other men in the community. That's what it was. Take care of the widows and the fatherless. The community is supposed to take care of them. Of course God's gonna take care of them. He's their covering, official covering. It's gonna be by the Father. But your job does not stop with your household, you see.

What I love about this is we have many examples in Scripture. [Hebrews 11:7](#) is one of them: "By faith Noah, when warned about the things not yet seen, in holy fear—fear of God—built an ark and saved his family." Because of Noah's faith, his family was saved. We see this more times in Scripture. Cornelius, through Cornelius' faith, his family was saved. And even the jailer in Acts. Remember when Paul was in the jail and an earthquake came and all the doors fell open and the jailer comes up. Oh no, my prisoners are gone. What am I going to do? He pulls his sword, fixing to end his own life because he's lost the prisoners. They start singing to him. Hey man, let me tell you about Yeshua. Walk out of the jail, sir. What are you guys still doing here? And he believed, and he and his household were saved that very day.

A Man's Responsibility for His Household

It is the responsibility of the husband to make his household righteous. Now, does that mean that all your family's going to be saved, but they're a bunch of heathens, and you're not? I'm not

saying that. What I'm saying is it's the responsibility of the man of the house to lead his family in righteousness and in the ways of God. Men, you're not supposed to convince your wives to follow you. You're supposed to convince your wives that you're worth following by the example of fearing God. It should not be the other way around.

When was the last time that you prayed for your wife? On the way to work every morning, my coffee, I pray a little prayer. No. When was the last time you sat down with your wife and interceded for her, with her, before the Father? What a better example of this, the righteousness being trickled down. What a better example to demonstrate Messiah's role as our bridegroom. Is it by our righteousness that we're back in covenant with the Father? No, because [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him, our groom, bridegroom, in him we might become the righteousness of God." It is through our husband that we are made righteous, you see.

There's always something that bothered me about thinking of myself as a bride. I'm the bride of Christ. Any of you guys ever struggle with that? No? Just me? I mean, you think of a bride, you think of the white dress, you think of the veil, and here I am walking, what? Walking down with my bouquet, am I going to toss the—I mean, really? You know? Heels? What is this vision? Yeah, that's your beard? I mean, how am I going to be a bride? How am I going to be a bride? I'm supposed to be a female bride. You're supposed to be the helpmate. Is there a connection? That one that would surround your bridegroom, surround Messiah, and be willing to fight and back him up with whatever tries to come against him. That is our job as the bride of Messiah. It's not some fancy thing. That's why John and Paul make these references. He wasn't talking about dressing up and being a pretty little wife. He was talking about gearing up and being an aid of support. That's our job. That's our job as the followers of Messiah. We follow him and we stand up for him. And we witness and we tell others about our bridegroom.

Our Covenant as the Bride of Messiah

How many of you know that Messiah paid the bride price for you? We're hitched, guys. Covenant. That's what Hebrews talks about. If you continue transgressing against Messiah, you're trampling the covenant, the blood of the covenant. You're trampling the marriage. Bride price has been paid. Already been paid. We're supposed to honor him, help him.

"Who can find a virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies?" You guys ever read [Proverbs 31](#)? This girl was legit buying fields, making tapestries, dressing herself, making clothes,

planting vineyards, planting fields, harvesting, owning and managing servants, owning and managing business. What'd her husband do? Sat at the gates all day.

Women in the Near East were looked at very differently than what I fear we've been taught. What is her price far above rubies? Her children stand up and encourage her, and so does her husband who praises her. That's a convicting verse. I wonder how many men were coming to this teaching being like, yeah, we're gonna talk about the place of a woman. We're gonna do this. Get them, Matt. What is the place of a woman? The place of a woman is in the constant honor, encouragement, and support given to her by her husband.

Why is it that we pray to God through Messiah? Why is it that we petition things, we bring things to him? Father, I bring this before you today. Because it's his job to encourage us, to support us. It's the job of our Father. It's the job of our bridegroom. If you're a husband here today, that's your job to your wife. Wives, it's your job to aid your husband. You could say submit. You could. But we know the context of the word means something much more than that. Help your husband. Carry the burden. Assist him.

Your husband in carrying the burden of leading the family, guys. She cannot assist you in carrying the burden of leading the family if you're not leading it. Sometimes we just need to buck up and take charge and take the leadership role in our household. My wife prays better than me, probably. But that's not her responsibility. She'll do it, but it's not her responsibility to be the spiritual leader of the household. She does such a great job at it, I'm sure she does. But it's your responsibility, guys. She's supposed to be helping you carry the burden of leading the home.

The Message of One Verse

That was the end of my slide. And that was the message that I studied up all week to talk about. That one verse in [Genesis 25](#): Isaac beseeched the Father on behalf of Rebekah. That one pricked me very hard. I can do better. I can do better as a spiritual leader of my household. I can do better at praying for my wife for the blessings that she needs.

What if it's true? What if, with what the rabbi states, it's tradition, but what if it's true that God yearns to hear the prayers of those who fear Him? That should make you excited to beseech the Father. Women, you should pray for your husbands. You should pray for your households. Men, you should pray for the widows and the orphans as if they were part of your household because Scripture says they are. They are. That's the point.

You're supposed to be leading your household spiritually and honorably.

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