

Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible

According to Yeshua/Jesus, every divine institution is to be restored to its rightful state in the time of the end (Matthew 17:11). In the beginning, God created two of His greatest institutions: marriage and the Sabbath. Most Christians have a misunderstanding of the Sabbath. Could it be that most also have an incorrect understanding of marriage, specifically when it comes to divorce and remarriage?

What Does Scripture Teach About Divorce?

The provision and process for divorce is found in the statutes which were given to Moses by Yeshua Himself to guard the Ten Commandments. We see this in Deuteronomy 24:1:

(NKJV) "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he [1] writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and [2] sends her out of his house. [Bracketed numerals inserted for clarity.]

(ERV) "A man might marry a woman, and then find some secret thing about her that he does not like. If that man is not pleased with her, he must write the divorce papers and give them to her. Then he must send her from his house."

There was a process: Not only did there have to be an uncleanness in her, not just "any reason", but after that he was first to write her a letter of divorce, and only then would he send her away.

Compare that to the test the Pharisees gave to Yeshua on this topic in Matthew 19:3-9:

(NKJV) 3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce [G630 "put away"] his wife for just any reason?" 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' ? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." 7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce [Hebrew H3748, Greek G647], and to put her away [Hebrew H7971, Greek G630]?" 8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce [G630, put away] your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces [G630, properly "put away"] his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced [G630, properly "put away"] commits adultery."

What step is missing in this conversation? We see a putting away, but the required writing of divorce is not mentioned. As in Malachi 2:1, only half of the process is being followed in this example. Verses 8 and 9, when G630 is properly translated, make this clearer, as "divorce" or "writing of divorcement" is absent from this example:

He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever puts away his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is put away commits adultery.”

Let us examine Yeshua’s dialogue with the Pharisees carefully. First, don’t overlook that this was a test by the Pharisees to see if Yeshua would disregard Moses’ instruction. Are you (also wrongly) making divorce or remarriage a test to your brethren?

Yeshua pointed the Pharisees back to the beginning when God gave His gift of marriage. When Adam and Eve were united in holy wedlock, they would have understood that this was a *forever* experience. Had humans remained unfallen we would not be talking about divorce. Once sin entered the world, God’s ideal for man and woman became compromised on every side. Because of this, God has made provision in His law that empowers people to be forgiven for their wrong choices and start anew. (This is true in general, not just in matters of divorce. God’s forgiveness follows repentance, and divorce is never regarded by God as an unforgivable sin. Nor should we consider it as such.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, marriage relationships broke down the same way they do today. Throughout their journey Yeshua was that “spiritual Rock that followed” the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin. It was Yeshua, through Moses, who was their guide and teacher as to right and wrong (see [1 Corinthians 10:4](#)). Moses, through the direction of Yeshua, because of the hardness of their hearts, made the provision to divorce, consisting of two steps: both to 1) give a certificate of divorce, and 2) send the wife away.

It must be noted that Yeshua did *not* reverse the instructions He had previously given to Moses. He could not! He intended marriage to be forever, but because of the fall of man, men’s and women’s hearts can become hardened. Therefore, God, through Moses, gave a provision to allow two people to divorce if they come to the place of hardness of heart toward each other.

God Hates Divorce

Christians often make a thinly disguised accusatory statement that “God hates divorce” to those who are in the midst of one. Putting aside the fact that satan is the accuser of the brethren and we should avoid doing his job for him, truly understanding the Hebrew word that is translated as “divorce” in this passage requires a bit of digging.

While I am sure that divorce, especially if taken lightly, does not bring God pleasure, the translation “God hates divorce” is not accurate. Malachi 2:16:

(NKJV) “*For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce [H7971, shâlach, defined as “to send, send away”], For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.*”

(KJV) *For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.*

Both definitions and context need to be considered in this passage. The word translated “divorce” in some translations is merely “send away” or “put away”.

As for context, when you look at Malachi 2:10-16, you will discover that the passage is a rebuke from God regarding the spiritual and moral unfaithfulness of His people. The men of Judah (a people group, not an individual) were putting away their Hebrew wives and taking pagan wives, and God gave a warning that He would cut off those who did this.

Consider also, does God do things that He Himself hates? God divorced Israel, but the difference was that He did it properly, with a two-part process that must be understood.

[Jeremiah 3:8](#) *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away (H7971), and given her a bill of divorce (H3748, the Hebrew equivalent to G647); yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*

Here we see two steps in the divorce process: 1) putting away, and 2) giving a writing of divorce. A correct translation makes it evident that it is the putting away *without the legal finalization* is what God hates. Let’s look deeper at that idea that “putting away” (as in Malachi 2:16) is not the same as divorce, but rather is only one first step in a divorce.

Divorce, or Put Away? What is the Difference?

[Matthew 19:9 \(NKJV\)](#): *And I say to you, whoever **divorces** [G630] his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is **divorced** [G630] commits adultery.”*

[Matthew 19:9 \(KJV\)](#): *And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away [G630] his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is **put away** [G630] doth commit adultery.*

The word in [Matthew 19:9](#), sometimes wrongly translated as divorce, is G630, *apoluo*. It appears 69 times in the New Testament, only a handful of which are related to a marital separation. Here are three other examples of the typical use of the same word:

[Matthew 27:17](#) ... *Whom will ye that I release (G630) unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus ...?*
[Mark 8:9](#) *And they that had eaten were about four thousand: he sent them away. (G630)*
[Luke 13:12](#) ... *Woman, thou art loosed (G630) from thine infirmity.*

Question: Did Pilate divorce Barabbas? Did Yeshua divorce the four thousand He had just fed? Did He divorce the woman with the issue of blood? No, obviously not. *Apoluo*, G630, is made up from two Greek words: G575 (*apo*, meaning separation) and G3089 (*luo*, to loose something

that was bound). Together, it means “to both loose and separate from a person or thing”. The word does not mean “divorce”, only to separate.

The Greek term for writing of divorcement, (G647, apostasion) appears only three times in the New Testament, each time coupled with sending away the wife:

[Matthew 5:31](#) It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away (G630) his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement (G647)

[Matthew 19:7](#) They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement (G647), and to put her away? (G630)

[Mark 10:4](#) And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement (G647), and to put her away (G630).

On the surface, one might think that G630 and G647 are related because they sound similar, but a concordance or lexicon search will show that they are not.

A putting away only, without a writing of divorcement, was the issue that was asked by the Pharisees and answered by Yeshua:

Asked: [Matthew 19:3](#) The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting [testing] him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away (G630) [notice no mention of a writing of divorce] his wife for every cause?

Answered: [Matthew 19:8-9](#): He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to separate from [G630 put away] your wives [notice there is no mention of giving a writing of divorce]. But from the beginning [when Moses first mentioned divorce in Deuteronomy 24], it [being separated without a writing of divorce] was not so. And I say to you, whoever separates from [G630 puts away] his wife [notice no mention of a writing of divorce], except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is separated [G630 put away, again, no mention of a writing of divorce] commits adultery.”

This implies that some were putting their wives away without a writing of divorce. Most people understand today that if a married couple separates but have not obtained a legal writing of divorce, that they are still married, even if not living together. They are said to be “separated”, but not yet “divorced”. In most countries founded on Judeo-Christian values, it is illegal to marry another without first getting legally divorced from a current spouse. Those who do so can be charged with the crime of bigamy. Therefore, if a married person who is only separated from their spouse marries another, they are both an adulterer and bigamist.

Perhaps the reason that fornication was an exception for the need of a writing of divorce is that the spouse had already moved on in adultery, thus rendering a certificate of divorce a moot process. Sexual union is Biblically considered marriage. If a man moves out or sends out his wife (becoming separated but not yet divorced), and, during the time between the separation and

obtaining the legal writing of divorce, either one marries by fornication another person, they are committing adultery. This is because without the writing of divorce they are still married.

This was the second time the concept of a putting away without a writing of divorce came up. We saw the same discussion in the Sermon on the Mount, [Matthew 5:31](#). Again, some translations are mistranslated in that they render G630 as “divorce” instead of “putting away”, even though there is no mention of a writing of divorce (G647). The King James translators did this in one of the three times the word appears in this passage:

[Matthew 5:31-32](#) It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away (G630) his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement (G647). But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away (G630) his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced (G630 – put away) committeth adultery.

Unfortunately, with the mistranslation of G630, people read this to mean something entirely different than what is being taught. They wrongly interpret it to mean that the only reason you can get a divorce is if there is adultery, and every other type of marital breakdown must be endured until death do you part.. Instead, what He taught can be properly rephrased as follows:

The only time you can put away your wife without a writing of divorce is if she is already committing adultery [because at this point a writing becomes irrelevant because she has broken the marriage covenant and essentially married another already]. However, if you put away your wife without a writing of divorce (for any other reason), and she remarries, she and her new husband are now committing adultery [due to the lack of following the complete divorce procedure, which involves a full release in writing].

Is Remarriage Automatically Adultery?

Looking again at [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#), remarriage was allowed. The woman who was both given a writing of divorce and put away was allowed to remarry. If her second husband died or divorced her (given a writing and put away), she was allowed to marry a third time, except not to the first husband. Nowhere is she called an adulteress or subjected to the stoning that was the punishment for adultery when she remarried the first or even the second time. Apparently, the first husband was also allowed to remarry as well, just not to the first wife.

It is understandable why remarriage at this stage would be an abomination in the eyes of God. If a man were to declare that he found no favor toward his wife to the point of meriting divorce (what Yeshua and Pharisees referred to as “hardness of heart”), for him to want to take her back later as his wife is an admission that the original divorce was not for a valid reason, thus an abomination.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was a concession given to Moses, but it was final. This demonstrates the seriousness of the matter of divorcing. God does not declare that divorce can never happen, but if it does happen, it is final to the point of becoming an abomination if the couple later remarried after one or both had been married to another.

We cannot gloss over the fact that *remarriage to a new partner was never forbidden*. Not even a third marriage after a proper second divorce was forbidden. God does not declare that a divorce means that you must live alone the rest of your life, just because your first (or even second) marriage failed. A dysfunctional marriage that comes apart because two parties are no longer walking together is not the unpardonable sin, as some make it out to be.

What God Has Joined Together

“Therefore *what God has joined* together, let not man separate” ([Matthew 19:6](#)). What does this Scripture mean? In order for God to join two people in holy matrimony they must be joined according to His way and will, which is His standard. When a couple marries outside of a knowledge of God and His law, it cannot be said that God joined them together and made them one flesh. They did it on their own, without His guidance. Therefore, God never sanctified their union.

This is why Paul said in [Romans 8:5-8](#) (ERV)

“People who live following their sinful selves think only about what they want. But those who live following the Spirit are thinking about what the Spirit wants them to do. If your thinking is controlled by your sinful self, there is spiritual death. But if your thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and peace. Why is this true? Because anyone whose thinking is controlled by their sinful self is against God. They refuse to obey God’s law. And really they are not able to obey it. Those who are ruled by their sinful selves cannot please God.”

Why? This is because they do not know the requirements of God, therefore do not subject themselves to God’s standard but instead live by their own world view.

Divorce When Unequally Yoked Spiritually

Just as the Old Testament never condemned remarriage, the New Testament follows this standard. Paul and the disciples taught by using the Old Testament. The teachings of Yeshua would have been taught as well; however, the complete writings of the New Testament were not in place at that time. Therefore, the Old Testament would have been the primary source for instruction for new believers. The texts quoted above from Deuteronomy would have been the foundation in a study and teaching regarding divorce. Add to this the Scriptures that inform us that when the Jewish people went back to Israel after the captivity in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, they were *commanded* to put away their pagan wives.

[Ezra 10:10-12](#) “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves [H914, bâdal, meaning to divide, separate] from the people of the land and from the pagan wives.’ Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, ‘Yes! As you have said, so we must do.’”

Similarly, when the Gentiles accepted the gospel, they turned from the pagan practices of their forefathers. Conflict came to families when husbands and wives disagreed as to accepting this newfound faith. When this conflict jeopardized the peace of the home or required action against one's conscience and conviction, it became necessary to leave a spouse to eliminate these challenges. This can reasonably be expected to accelerate when the time of trouble and shaking is fully upon us. Many marriages are likely to break down during the tribulation if, for example, one spouse wants to take the mark of the beast and the other refuses. Divorce will likely be the only solution in those instances.

Paul's admonition was to stay together, *if possible*, but *if it is not*, then a believer is not bound to stay. He counseled those who had become believers and then found themselves in an unequally yoked situation that disrupted the peace of the home. He advises them to stay in the relationship if the unbelieving spouse is "willing".

1 Corinthians 7:12-15 "But to the rest [Gentile converts] I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace."

It is important to look closer at three terms in this passage: "willing", "not under bondage" and "God has called us to peace". The word "willing" may give the idea that if someone is "willing" to put up with someone by gritting their teeth hard enough, they can stay married, even if their marriage has turned into the most grueling marathon ever endured. Some believe this is what married couples are under bondage to do under any circumstances except adultery.

The word "willing" in this text is a very poor translation of the Greek word used in the original text. Strong's G4909: "From G4862 and G2106; to think well of in common, that is, assent to, feel gratified with: – allow, assent, be pleased, have pleasure."

This clears up the inconsistency between what many mistakenly interpret Paul was teaching with the provision given to Moses which never changed. Paul was affirming what Yeshua had instructed Moses. If a spouse was "pleased", or "gratified with", "assented to", or "had pleasure" in the marriage, and would not create unrest and/or conflict in the home, then by all means, stay together!

However, if because of disagreement, life in the home has become a constant battle and positioning for control, then you are "not under bondage" and are allowed to remove yourself from the marriage, because "God has called us to peace" and not war within our marriages. It is not a Christian's duty or obligation to be on the receiving end of mental, physical, or spiritual persecution in their own home. It would serve the devil's purpose, and not God's, if a marriage relationship continued indefinitely in such a completely dysfunctional and combative environment.

Remarriage is NOT a Sin!

Torah already established in Deuteronomy 24 that a divorced person was free to remarry, even multiple times. We find something very similar from Paul as we continue through 1 Corinthians. But before you read this, ask yourself a question: Is it a sin for a virgin to get married? Any honest person would say “Of course not.” Why do I ask? Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 7:27-28:

27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 **But even if you do marry, you have not sinned**; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

Notice that the “you” Paul is speaking to in verse 27 is advised that if they are married, they should seek to remain married (one must assume “if at all possible” would apply). This same “you” is also told that if they have been loosed (which would imply legally divorced), they should not seek a wife. But verse 28 continues telling this same “you” that “but even if” “you” marry (which would be a remarriage, by default of the context in the prior verse), “**you have not sinned.**” Clearly, if you have gotten a properly legal divorce and then remarried, just as provided in Deuteronomy 24, “you have not sinned”! You are not compelled to live alone the rest of your life because your first marriage became unbearable.

Paul then goes on to speak to the question posed before reading these verses: Is it a sin for a virgin to get married? He states, “if a virgin marries, she has not sinned”. When Paul says, “and if a virgin marries” (which would imply the virgin marries “you”, the person Paul is speaking to), “she has not sinned.”

Paul was advising, in what he thought was the time of the end, that people who were married should try to stay married, and that people who were divorced should not seek to remarry, but if they do remarry, it is not sin! Not only that, but he continues that it is also not sin if a virgin marries a divorced person.

There is no hint at any of these actions being sin, let alone an unpardonable sin, yet most divorced and/or remarried Christians have experienced huge amounts of accusations, gossip, grief, and guilt because they or other Christians have taken a translation error (“putting away” translated as “divorce”) *and put that translation error above direct statements in both Torah and the New Testament.*

Divorce and remarriage are indeed allowed by God’s grace. This is true even more than once, and even to a virgin. Divorce and remarriage are not sin, at least according to God! And if not according to God, then on whose authority could it be considered as such to anyone else? Yours? Your pastors? Your church family? No; we must let God’s authority be our final word.

Conclusion

Yeshua, in the Torah and in the New Testament, was clear that divorce was not sin, and that remarriage, even more than once, was not sin.

Likewise, Paul is clear: Remarriage after divorce is not sin. Furthermore, a virgin who marries a divorced person is not committing sin.

God's provision in the law to divorce and remarry should be restored to its rightful place. In fact, doing so should make marriages better. If couples understood that they were not stuck with each other if there was no adultery, both parties would be much more accountable to each other to make the marriage the best that it could be. If they did, the marriage covenant between couples would do what it was intended to do, bring a happiness unequalled by any other type of earthly relationship.

Marriage is the analogy God gave to show His plan of redemption. Paul says that a wife ought to obey her husband. When the shadow picture is considered, referring to Christ and His church, this makes so much sense. If Yeshua is to have a bride, she must show herself faithful in obeying her bridegroom, Yeshua. In an earthly marriage relationship, it is the husband's duty to represent his Master, Yeshua. If he in fact does this, then God expects the woman to fall into line and be submissive to her husband, as her husband is submissive to The Bridegroom ([Ephesians 5:22-27](#)).

Most people wrongly believe that the only reason to terminate a marriage is through adultery. Few can cope in a marriage that has a form of loneliness that is far worse than what a person endures when single. Living alone inside of a marriage is a torment beyond description – just ask anyone who has lived it. God has made provision that such a marriage may be terminated. If one or both marriage partners have reached a point of hardness of heart, they are allowed to divorce, and to seek remarriage.

God has made provision for divorce and remarriage; therefore, we must allow individuals this God-given right and leave the results with God. We need not burden ourselves to become judge, accuser, and jury of a hurting couple. Let Him that is without sin cast the first stone. What is needed is love and prayer, not judgment, condemnation, and accusation from people on the outside thinking they are qualified to see what is on the inside.

Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.