# Polygamy - Is the Old Covenant Unified with the New Covenant?

*STUDY GUIDE | COVENANT UNITY AND MARRIAGE*

Finding the Ancient Path | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z0tLioR8zk

## Teaching Purpose

Examine whether biblical accounts of multiple wives, Torah provisions protecting members of those households, and New Covenant passages present one consistent ethic of marriage. Read the creation account, the historical examples, and the complete closing disagreement without collapsing description, regulation and command into one category.

## Quick Answer

The Teaching argues that Genesis 2:24 establishes a one-flesh covenant pattern reaffirmed by Yeshua and Paul. It treats multiple-wife narratives as descriptions, and laws protecting wives and children as regulation rather than endorsement. The speaker reads Leviticus 18:18 as a broader restriction, but that interpretation is disputed; the closing Q&A includes a substantive opposing case for polygyny.

## Core Distinction

Scripture explicitly records: one-flesh marriage in Genesis 2:24; Lamech and other men with more than one wife; protective rules in Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 21; Yeshua's quotation of Genesis 2; and apostolic household teaching. The speaker's interpretive conclusion: these passages indicate an unchanging prohibition of polygyny. An alternative view raised in Q&A challenges whether Leviticus 18:18 or the other texts explicitly support that prohibition. Study both claims against the passages themselves.

## Teaching Outline and Key Takeaways

### Introduction to the topic

The speaker asks whether the Old and New Covenants give a consistent picture of marriage. He distinguishes the fact that polygamy appears and is regulated in the Hebrew Scriptures from the question of whether it reflects God's desired marital pattern. Malachi 3:6 anchors his continuity argument.

### Genesis 2:24 as a standard

Genesis 2:24 supplies the Teaching's foundation: a man and his wife become one flesh. The speaker considers leaving and cleaving, covenant loyalty, shared life and the relationship between Messiah and His people in Ephesians 5.

### The first polygamist

The first explicit example of a man with two wives is Lamech in Cain's line (Genesis 4:19-24). The speaker reads Lamech's boasting about violence and his two wives as a negative narrative context, while acknowledging that the text reports the actions rather than issuing a direct marital command there.

### Consequences of polygamy

The Teaching surveys tensions in the households of Abraham and Hagar, Jacob with Leah and Rachel, Esau, Elkanah and Hannah, David, and Solomon. The speaker takes these narratives as warnings about rivalry and divided loyalty; the case studies should be read in their own literary contexts.

### Mosaic law and regulation

Exodus 21:10-11 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17 protect vulnerable wives and children where multiple-wife households exist. The speaker argues that a law regulating an existing situation is not identical with commendation. He then advances a disputed broader reading of Leviticus 18:18.

### New Covenant perspective

The speaker uses the Hebrew phrase in Leviticus 18:18 and parallels such as Exodus 26:3-6 to argue for a broader prohibition; this translation claim is debated. He compares Genesis 2:24 with Matthew 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 7:2, Ephesians 5:31-32 and qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6.

### Q&A and closing remarks

Fellowship participants affirm the value of distinguishing description from approval, then challenge the speaker. One participant distinguishes polygyny from the broader term polygamy and questions whether Torah actually forbids it; others discuss Genesis 2, levirate obligations and biblical marriage imagery. The speaker welcomes further correspondence and suggests a potential Part 2.

## Key Scriptures — Contextual Notes

- Genesis 1:27 - Humanity is described as created male and female in God's image, forming the setting for the marriage discussion.
- Genesis 2:24 - A man leaves his parents, is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.
- Malachi 3:6 - The LORD declares that He does not change; the speaker uses this as a continuity principle.
- Genesis 4:19-24 - Lamech takes two wives and speaks of vengeance; the first explicit multiple-wife account appears in Cain's lineage.
- Genesis 16:1-6 - Sarai gives Hagar to Abram; pregnancy is followed by household conflict.
- Genesis 29:16-30 - Jacob marries Leah and Rachel, and the narrative records preferential love and complex family relationships.
- Genesis 26:34-35 - Esau's marriages cause grief to Isaac and Rebekah.
- 1 Samuel 1:1-7 - Elkanah's household includes Hannah and Peninnah, whose rivalry causes great distress.

- 2 Samuel 3:2-5 - David's sons are listed by their different mothers, showing his complex family setting.
- 2 Samuel 13:1-29 - The account of Tamar, Amnon and Absalom portrays grave harm and conflict within David's family.
- 1 Kings 11:1-8 - Solomon's marriages to many foreign women are linked to his turn toward other gods.
- Exodus 21:10-11 - When another wife is taken, the first wife's food, clothing and marital rights must not be withheld.
- Deuteronomy 21:15-17 - In a household with two wives, inheritance rights of the true firstborn son are protected against favoritism.
- Leviticus 18:18 - The verse addresses taking a woman in rivalry with her sister; the scope of the Hebrew wording is disputed.
- Exodus 26:3-6 - The tabernacle curtain instructions use language of joining one piece to another, cited in the Teaching's Hebrew-word study.
- Ezekiel 1:9 - The creatures' wings touch one another, an additional comparison in the speaker's idiom argument.
- Matthew 19:3-6 - Yeshua cites creation and Genesis 2:24 when teaching that the two become one flesh.
- Matthew 19:8 - Yeshua discusses divorce and human hardness of heart, useful context when distinguishing accommodation from a creation ideal.
- 1 Corinthians 7:2 - Paul directs each man to have his own wife and each woman her own husband in a discussion of sexual morality.
- Ephesians 5:25-33 - Paul discusses mutual marital responsibility and applies Genesis 2:24 to the Messiah and His people.
- 1 Timothy 3:2 - An overseer is to be above reproach and a husband of one wife, in the context of leadership qualifications.
- Titus 1:6 - Qualifications for elders include faithfulness in marriage and a household subject to moral scrutiny.
- Deuteronomy 25:5-10 - The law discusses levirate responsibility in a specific widowhood situation; it arises during Q&A.
- Ezekiel 23:1-4 - A prophetic allegory portrays Samaria and Jerusalem as two sisters; a participant raises this in the marriage-imagery debate.
- James 3:16 - James links envy and selfish ambition with disorder and harmful practice, a comparison the speaker uses for household rivalry.

## Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a descriptive account and a prescriptive instruction?

2. How does Genesis 2:24 set the context for the Teaching and for Matthew 19?

3. What can the account of Lamech establish directly, and what requires inference?

4. How does the speaker use the household histories of Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon?

5. Whose rights are protected in Exodus 21:10-11 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17?

6. What does Leviticus 18:18 explicitly address, and what competing readings are proposed?

7. How do the parallels from Exodus 26 and Ezekiel 1 function in the speaker's argument?

8. What can and cannot be concluded from leadership qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

9. What are the strongest counterarguments presented by the participant who defends polygyny?

10. How might believers discuss this issue with humility, Scriptural care, and concern for those affected?

## Practical Study Applications

- Read Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:3-8 and Ephesians 5:25-33 side by side, and note each passage's immediate subject.
- Create two columns: passages reporting existing multiple-wife households and passages directly giving marriage instruction.
- Read Exodus 21:10-11 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17 in their wider legal settings. Identify the vulnerable people each provision protects.
- Compare the Hebrew-idiom claim about Leviticus 18:18 with the verse's context and the cited parallels; mark contested conclusions as questions.
- Use the full Q&A to write a fair summary of the speaker's view and the participant's opposing view before deciding what further study is needed.
- When discussing historical harm, do not blame victims or excuse abuse. Give priority to dignity, protection, and faithful responsibility.
- Practice asking what the text actually says before claiming that a law either endorses or forbids a practice.