

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 294

WHEN A WIFE GOES ASTRAY

A Covenant Deep Dive into *ki tisteh ishto* (if his wife goes astray) and *mevishah* (she who causes shame) — the Wife Who Loses Respect for Her Husband, and the House She Builds or Tears Down

What Does the Tanakh Say of a Wife Who Loses Respect for Her Husband, Undermines Him Before His Children, and Takes Her Counsel from Outside the House; What Does It Do to the Household; and What Is the Way Back for the Covenant Believer Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✠ ISLAM
Rabbinic law names the <i>moredet</i> (<i>rebellious wife</i>) and fines her seven dinars a week from her marriage settlement. The same mishnah names the husband who rebels against his wife and adds three dinars a week to hers (Mishnah Ketubot 5:7). Abba Shaul adds the wife who curses her husband's parents in his presence (Ketubot 7:6). Jewish practice gives great weight to <i>shalom bayit</i> (<i>peace of the home</i>). The Tanakh speaks first:	Ephesians 5:22–33 tells wives to respect their husbands and husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. 1 Peter 3:1–7 says the same and warns husbands that their prayers can be hindered. Titus 2:3–5 has older women teach younger women to love their husbands and children, and 1 Timothy 5:13 warns against <i>"gossips and busybodies."</i> The study sheet behind this document cites several of these. Each is tested	The Qur'an calls marriage <i>"affection and mercy"</i> (Q. 30:21). It names <i>nushuz</i> (<i>ill-conduct</i>) of a wife (Q. 4:34) and of a husband (Q. 4:128), and sends an arbiter from his family and one from hers (Q. 4:35). It forbids backbiting (Q. 49:12), and it sets the wives of Noah and Lot beside the wife of Pharaoh as the two ways a wife can go (Q. 66:10–11). The Tanakh sets the builder and the destroyer of the

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
what it calls a wife who shames her husband, and what it requires of him.	against the Tanakh in Section XI-B.	house side by side first (Proverbs 14:1).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to a study sheet titled "*when a wife goes astray*." The sheet describes a wife who has lost respect for her husband, who tries to take his authority or control him, and who undermines him before his children. It asks what that does to the household, what stands behind it, and what the way forward is. Six questions are taken up: what the Tanakh calls such a wife, what order it sets in a house, what happens to the children, what it says about gossip and outside voices, what it shows about separation and the help of elders, and how all of this applies to the covenant believer today. The sheet keeps its attention on the wife, and so does this study;

the husband's side was examined at length in **Doc 277** and **Doc 264** and is brought in here where the text itself turns to him. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with the English meaning, also in bold italic, in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. **Verse numbers follow the English version. In a few chapters the Hebrew Bible divides the chapter at a different point, so the same verse carries a different number in the Hebrew text. Where that happens, the Hebrew number is given in brackets on first citation, for example Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14].** Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, the Qur'an and hadith, and modern research are cited only as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The making of man and woman; the sentence of Genesis 3 ; the houses of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; honor of father and mother; the law of the wife who goes astray; the law of vows; the talebearer; the elders at the gate
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Micah, Habakkuk, Malachi	Michal; Abigail; Jezebel and Ahab; the woman of Shunem; <i>"like mother, like daughter"</i> ; the house divided against itself; Yahweh as the husband who calls His wife back; the wife of one's youth
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Nehemiah, 2 Chronicles	The crown and the rottenness; the house built and torn down; the wife of valor; the talebearer and the counselor; envy; Naomi and Ruth; Esther before the king; the Persian decree

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 18:15–17; Romans 1:29; 12:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10–11; 11:3; 15:33; Ephesians 5:22–33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Timothy 5:13; Titus 2:3–5; 1 Peter 3:1–7; Hebrews 13:4	The passages the study sheet cites, and those most often preached on this subject, each tested against the Tanakh in Section XI-B
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 4:34–35; 4:128; 30:21; 49:12; 66:10–11; Jami at-Tirmidhi 3895	<i>nushuz (ill-conduct)</i> of wife and of husband; arbitration; backbiting; the two kinds of wife
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Ketubot 5:7; 7:6; Talmud Arakhin 15b	The <i>moredet (rebellious wife)</i> and the rebelling husband; the wife who curses her husband's parents; the evil tongue
Historical sources	Septuagint (Greek) Isaiah 3:12	How an ancient translation read a verse often applied to wives (Section XII)
Modern research	Michael Rosenfeld, <i>"Who Wants the Breakup?"</i> (How Couples Meet and Stay Together survey, 2009–2015); McDermott, Fowler, and Christakis, <i>Social Forces</i> 92(2), 2013; Valenzuela, Halpern, and Katz, <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> 36, 2014; Pew Research Center, <i>"Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age"</i> (2020); Rowen and Emery, <i>Couple and Family Psychology</i> 3(3), 2014; Tumin and Qian (Ohio State University), 2012; John Gottman	Observational research on who ends marriages, how divorce and contempt spread, social media, children who hear one parent run down the other, and how separations end; tested in Section VII

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — THE STUDY SHEET AND THE TEXT

I-A. The Questions as They Are Usually Asked

A study sheet was put before this Institution under the title "*when a wife goes astray*." It describes a marriage that has come to separation through "*severe disrespect, worldly influences, and toxic communication*," and it keeps its attention on one figure: the wife who has lost respect for her husband, who "*attempts to be equal, or to take away his authority*," who undermines him before his children, and who tries to control him. It names three consequences: the decay of the household, spiritual stagnation, and the danger of separation. It names two things behind the conduct: gossip and worldliness. And it names one way forward: bringing in elders, with any separation aimed at repentance and healing and not at a quick divorce.

The sheet draws on the New Testament as well as the Tanakh, and it carries its own instruction: "*NT passages used for reference, not MB standard. However if they line up with Tanakh, point it out*." This study follows that instruction. Every claim is tested against the Tanakh alone. Section XI-B then sets each New Testament passage beside the Tanakh text it matches, and says so where no Tanakh text carries it.

The questions put to this Institution are these:

First: what does the Tanakh call a wife who loses respect for her husband, and what does it say she does to him and to the house?

Second: what authority does the written covenant give a husband, and is it rebellion for a wife to stand as his equal?

Third: what happens to the children when one parent is torn down in front of them?

Fourth: what does the Tanakh say about gossip, outside voices, and the ways of the surrounding world coming into a house?

Fifth: what does the text show about separation, and who should step in?

Sixth: how does all of this apply to the covenant believer today?

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 277** (*Better a Corner of the Roof*) read the five proverbs on the contentious wife, laid the same charge on the contentious man, and set out the Tanakh's witnesses on separation. **Doc 264** (*As the Sin of Divination*) followed rebellion into marriage and friendship. **Doc 279** (*A Scroll of Cutting Off*) examined the divorce law of **Deuteronomy 24:1–4**. **Doc 235** (*The Two Inclinations*) showed that the inclination to evil is

laid on man and woman alike. **Doc 273** and **Doc 293** examined the law against hidden hatred and the grudge. **Doc 203** and the March 2026 study *The Covenant of Marriage* set out the marriage covenant itself; this document corrects several points in both (Section XII).

I-B. The Questions in the Tanakh's Own Terms

The title of the sheet is a phrase from the Torah. The law of the wife suspected of unfaithfulness opens with it:

"If any man's wife goes astray and commits a breach of faith against him" (Numbers 5:12).

The Hebrew is **אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי־תִשָּׁטָה אִשְׁתּוֹ וּמָעַלָה בּוֹ מַעַל**, *ish ish ki tisteh ishto u-ma'alah vo ma'al* (any man, if his wife goes astray and breaks faith with him). In that law the phrase has a narrow meaning. To *satah* (to turn aside / go astray) there is to lie with another man (Numbers 5:13). The sheet uses the phrase more widely, for a wife who has turned from honoring her husband, with no charge of adultery made.

The Tanakh has words for that wider turning, and they are different words. Michal *"despised him in her heart"* (2 Samuel 6:16). Sarai *"was lightly esteemed"* in Hagar's eyes (Genesis 16:4). And Proverbs speaks of the wife *"who causes shame"* (Proverbs 12:4). This study keeps the two apart. A wife who has lost respect for her husband has not thereby committed the breach of faith of Numbers 5, and no one may speak of her as if she had.

In Tanakh's own terms the six questions become:

1. What are the words?
2. What order does the text set in a house?
3. What do the narratives show of a wife who tears down?
4. What does the law of honor require in front of children?
5. What does the text say of the talebearer and of the way of the nations?
6. And what road back does it open?

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (Deuteronomy 19:15). It is **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>satah (to turn aside / go astray)</i> , שָׂטָה	H7847	To turn off the path. In Numbers 5 it is a wife's unfaithfulness; in Proverbs it is said to a son about his own heart	Numbers 5:12, 19–20, 29; Proverbs 4:15; 7:25
<i>ma'al (breach of faith)</i> , מָעַל	H4604	Treachery against a trust; used of a wife's unfaithfulness and of trespass against what belongs to Yahweh	Numbers 5:12, 27; Joshua 22:16
<i>mevishah (she who causes shame)</i> , מְבִישָׁה	H954	From <i>bosh (to be ashamed)</i> : one who brings shame on another. The same form is used of a son and of a servant	Proverbs 12:4; 10:5; 14:35; 19:26
<i>raqav (rottenness)</i> , רָקַב	H7538	Decay that works unseen from the inside, as in wood or bone. Five occurrences in the Tanakh	Proverbs 12:4; 14:30; Hosea 5:12; Habakkuk 3:16
<i>eshet chayil (a wife of valor)</i> , אִשְׁת־חַיִל	H802 / H2428	A wife of strength and ability. <i>chayil (strength / valor)</i> is also the word for an army's might	Proverbs 12:4; 31:10; Ruth 3:11
<i>ateret (crown)</i> , עֲטָרֶת	H5850	A crown, worn where everyone can see it	Proverbs 12:4; 17:6
<i>bazah (to despise)</i> , בָּזָה	H959	To hold as worthless. Used of Michal toward David, of a son toward his mother, and of wives toward husbands in the Persian court's fear	2 Samuel 6:16; Proverbs 15:20; 23:22; Esther 1:17
<i>qalal (to be light / lightly esteemed)</i> , קָלַל; <i>kabbed (to honor / give weight)</i> , כָּבֵד	H7043 / H3513	Opposites. To honor is to treat as weighty; to despise is to treat as light	Genesis 16:4–5; Exodus 20:12; 1 Samuel 2:30

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>ba'al (husband / owner), בַּעַל; ish (man / husband), אִישׁ</i>	H1167 / H376	The Tanakh's two ordinary words for a husband	Genesis 20:3; Deuteronomy 24:4; Proverbs 12:4; 31:11; Hosea 2:16 [Hebrew 2:18]
<i>mashal (to rule), מָשַׁל</i>	H4910	To rule, to govern. Used of the husband in the sentence on the woman, and of a man ruling the sin at his own door	Genesis 3:16; 4:7; Proverbs 16:32
<i>teshuqah (desire), תְּשׁוּקָה</i>	H8669	Desire, longing. Three occurrences only; its sense in Genesis 3:16 is disputed	Genesis 3:16; 4:7; Song of Songs 7:10 [Hebrew 7:11]
<i>ezer kenegdo (a helper corresponding to him), עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ</i>	H5828 / H5048	A help who stands facing him as his match	Genesis 2:18, 20
<i>banah (to build), בָּנָה; haras (to tear down), הָרַס</i>	H1129 / H2040	The two things a woman can do to her own house	Proverbs 14:1; 24:3; Ruth 4:11
<i>okher (one who troubles), עוֹכֵר</i>	H5916	To stir up, to bring disaster on. The word used of Achan	Proverbs 11:29; 15:27; Joshua 7:25
<i>rakhil (talebearer), רָכִיל</i>	H7400	One who goes about carrying words, as a peddler carries goods	Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 20:19
<i>nirgan (whisperer), נִרְגָן</i>	H5372	One who murmurs against another in private	Proverbs 16:28; 18:8; 26:20
<i>sod (a confidence), סוֹד</i>	H5475	What is said within a closed circle; confidential counsel	Proverbs 11:13; 25:9
<i>homiyyah (loud / restless), הִמְיָה</i>	H1993	Noisy, turbulent, never settled	Proverbs 7:11; 9:13
<i>sut (to incite), סוֹת</i>	H5496	To stir a person up to act. Used of Jezebel toward Ahab and of the one who entices in secret	1 Kings 21:25; Deuteronomy 13:6 [Hebrew 13:7]

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>beqim (to confirm)</i> , יְקִימוּ; <i>befer (to annul)</i> , יִפְּרוּ	H6965 / H6565	What a husband may do with his wife's vow on the day he hears it	Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14]
<i>ga'al (to loathe)</i> , גָּעַל	H1602	To reject with disgust	Ezekiel 16:45; Leviticus 26:44
<i>shuv (to return)</i> , שׁוּב	H7725	To turn back; the Tanakh's word for repentance	Hosea 2:7 [Hebrew 2:9]; Hosea 14:1 [Hebrew 14:2]; Jeremiah 3:12

Five lexical observations govern what follows.

First, *satab (to turn aside / go astray)* is a word about a path. In the Torah it names a wife's unfaithfulness (**Numbers 5:12**). In Proverbs the same verb is spoken to a son about his own heart: *"Let not your heart turn aside to her ways"* (**Proverbs 7:25**). Going astray is something the Tanakh warns men and women against with one word.

Second, honor and contempt are weights. To *kabbed (to honor / give weight)* is to treat a person as heavy; to *qalal (to be light / lightly esteemed)* is to treat him as light. One verse holds all three of the words of this study together:

"those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

The Hebrew is יִקְלוּ וְיִבְדִּי אֶכְבֹּד וְכִי-מִכְבְּדִי אֶכְבֹּד. When the sheet says a wife "loses respect" for her husband, the Hebrew for it is that he has become light in her eyes.

Third, *mevishab (she who causes shame)* is not a word reserved for women. Proverbs uses the masculine of the same form for a son who sleeps through the harvest (**Proverbs 10:5**), for a son who *"does violence to his father and chases away his mother"* (**Proverbs 19:26**), and for a servant (**Proverbs 14:35**). It is the word for anyone inside a house whose conduct disgraces the one whose name the house carries.

Fourth, *raqav (rottenness)* is slow and hidden. Yahweh uses it of His own quiet judgment:

"I am like a moth to Ephraim, and like rottenness to the house of Judah" (**Hosea 5:12**).

The prophet uses it of his own body giving way:

"rottenness enters my bones, and I tremble where I stand" (**Habakkuk 3:16**).

Proverbs uses it twice, and the second use matters for this study: envy also is *"rottenness of the bones"* (**Proverbs 14:30**; Section VI-D).

Fifth, the Tanakh's words for a husband are *ba'al* (*husband / owner*) and *ish* (*man / husband*). The phrase *"head of the wife"* does not occur in Tanakh. *rosh* (*head*) is used of the heads of fathers' houses and of tribes (**Exodus 6:14**; **Numbers 1:4**), and never of a husband in relation to his wife. The prophet Hosea even sets the two husband-words side by side on the day of restoration:

"you shall call Me 'my husband,' and shall no longer call Me 'my master'" (Hosea 2:16 [Hebrew 2:18]).

The Hebrew is **תִּקְרָא אִישִׁי וְלֹא־תִקְרָאִי־לִי עוֹד בְּעָלִי**: *ishi* (*my man / my husband*) in place of *ba'ali* (*my master / my husband*). The next verse gives the first reason, that the names of the Baals will be taken out of her mouth. It is still the case that the restored marriage speaks with the word of **Genesis 2:23**.

III. THE ORDER OF THE HOUSE — WHAT THE TEXT GIVES THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE

The sheet says the wife *"attempts to be equal, or to take away his authority."* Those are two different things, and Tanakh answers them differently. This section sets out both answers before the wife's conduct is examined.

III-A. Made Together — What "Equal" Means in the Text

"And Elohim created the man in His image; in the image of Elohim He created him; male and female He created them. And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion'" (Genesis 1:27–28).

The image, the blessing, and the commission to rule the earth are given to both. The genealogy repeats it:

"male and female He created them, and He blessed them, and called their name Adam" (Genesis 5:2).

The woman is made as *ezer kenegdo* (*a helper corresponding to him*) (**Genesis 2:18**), in Hebrew **עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ**, and Doc 264 showed that *ezer* (*help*) is the word used of Yahweh as Israel's help (**Psalms 121:1–2**). When the two sinned, each was questioned separately and each was sentenced separately (**Genesis 3:9–19**).

So before **Yahweh** the man and the woman stand on the same ground. A wife who knows that she bears the image, and that she will answer to **Yahweh** for herself, is not in rebellion. That is the text's own teaching.

III-B. What the Covenant Lays on the Husband

The same text gives the husband a charge over the house, and it ties duties and penalties to that charge. Four witnesses carry it.

Witness One — the way of the house. **Yahweh** says of Abraham:

"For I have known him, so that he may command his sons and his house after him, and they shall keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18:19).

Joshua speaks the same way at Shechem: *"as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh"* (Joshua 24:15). The man is held answerable for the direction of the house.

Witness Two — the law of vows. This is the Torah's clearest statute on a husband's authority. When a wife makes a vow, her husband hears it. If he says nothing, it stands. If he annuls it on the day he hears it, it is void, *"and Yahweh will forgive her"* (Numbers 30:8, 12 [Hebrew 30:9, 13]). The rule is stated in one line:

"Every vow and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may annul it" (Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14]).

The Hebrew is **אִישׁהּ יְקִימֶנּוּ וְאִישׁהּ יִפְרֹנוּ**. The same chapter sets three limits on him. He may act only on the day he hears; his silence confirms the vow (Numbers 30:14 [Hebrew 30:15]). If he annuls it later, the guilt moves to him: *"he shall bear her iniquity"* (Numbers 30:15 [Hebrew 30:16]), in Hebrew **וְנָשָׂא אֶת־עֲוֹנָהּ**. And the vow of a widow or of a divorced woman stands with no man's confirmation (Numbers 30:9 [Hebrew 30:10]). The statute is about the order of a house. It does not say that a woman cannot stand before **Yahweh** on her own word.

Witness Three — the ordinary word. A husband is a *ba'al* (*husband / owner*), and a married woman is *be'ulat ba'al* (*one married to a husband*) (Genesis 20:3; Deuteronomy 22:22). Sarah speaks of Abraham as *adoni* (*my lord*) (Genesis 18:12).

Witness Four — the duties and the penalty. He may not diminish his wife's food, clothing, or marital rights (Exodus 21:10). In the first year he is released from the army to *"gladden his wife whom he has taken"* (Deuteronomy 24:5). If he hates her and puts an evil name on her, the elders of the city chastise him and fine him a hundred shekels of silver, and he may never send her away

(**Deuteronomy 22:13–19**). And the prophet says **Yahweh** Himself stands as witness against the man who deals treacherously with the wife of his youth (**Malachi 2:14–16**).

In the Tanakh, then, a husband's authority is never set out apart from his answerability. The man who may annul a vow is the man who bears the iniquity if he annuls it wrongly. The man called *ba'al* (*husband / owner*) is the man the elders fine.

III-C. Genesis 3:16 — The Struggle Foretold

"Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

The Hebrew is וְאֵל-אִשָּׁךְ תְּשׁוּקָתְךָ וְהוּא יִמְשַׁל-בָּךְ. Two things must be said about this verse.

Where it stands. It stands among the consequences of the first sin, beside pain in childbirth, thorns, sweat, and death. It describes the world after the breach. It is not a statute. **Doc 264** and **Doc 235** found the same. The husband's charge over the house rests on the four witnesses above. It does not rest on this verse.

What it describes. *teshuqah* (*desire*) occurs three times in the Tanakh, and two readings of it are held. On the first it is longing, as in the Song:

"I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me" (Song of Songs 7:10 [Hebrew 7:11]).

On the second it is a desire to master, as four verses later, where the same two words meet again: sin's *"desire is for you, but you must rule over it"* (Genesis 4:7).

The Hebrew bears both readings, and this study reports both. On either one the verse says that marriage after the garden carries a pull between her desire and his rule.

The sheet says the wife *"attempts to exert control over him."* That is one half of a struggle Genesis 3:16 foretold from the beginning: her desire pulling one way and his rule pulling the other. The text holds both of them responsible for it, and it does not say the answer is for either one to win.

III-D. What a Strong Wife Looks Like in a House in Order

The Tanakh's portraits of good wives are not portraits of silent women.

The wife of valor *"considers a field and buys it"* (Proverbs 31:16).

She trades with merchants (Proverbs 31:24), provides for her household and sets her maidens their portion (Proverbs 31:15), and teaches:

"the teaching of kindness is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:26).

The woman of Shunem is called *"a great woman,"* and it was she who proposed building a room for the prophet (2 Kings 4:8–10). Manoah's wife reasoned more soundly than her husband (Judges 13:22–23).

Elohim told Abraham, *"whatever Sarah says to you, listen to her voice"* (Genesis 21:12).

When Jacob had to leave Laban, he called Rachel and Leah out to the field and laid his whole case before them, and they answered together,

"whatever Elohim has said to you, do" (Genesis 31:4–16).

None of these women are called rebels. What sets them apart from the wife of Proverbs 12:4 is not how much they said or did. It is what their strength did to the house:

"The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he lacks no gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:11–12).

The Hebrew of the first clause is בֶּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ, and of the second verse גְּמִלְתָּהּ טוֹב וְלֹא־רָע כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ. Because of her,

"her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31:23).

Her strength raises his standing. That is the line the text draws. The question it asks of a wife is whether her husband and her house are built up by her or pulled down. It does not ask whether she is strong.

Finding — that man and woman bear the image alike and each answer to **Yahweh** for himself is **Corroborated** (Genesis 1:27–28; 5:2; 3:9–19).

That the covenant lays on the husband a charge over the way of his house, with real authority and matching accountability, is **Corroborated** (Genesis 18:19; Joshua 24:15; Numbers 30:8–15; Deuteronomy 22:13–19).

That **Genesis 3:16** is a command making the husband ruler is **Not in the text**; it stands among the consequences.

That a wife's counsel, initiative, or equal worth is rebellion is **Not in the text** (Genesis 21:12; Proverbs 31:11–26; Judges 13:22–23).

That a wife who pulls down her husband's standing departs from the wife the Tanakh praises is **Corroborated** (Proverbs 12:4; 31:11–12, 23).

IV. WHEN RESPECT IS LOST — THE WIFE WHO CAUSES SHAME

IV-A. Crown or Rottenness — Proverbs 12:4

"A wife of valor is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones" (Proverbs 12:4).

The Hebrew is **אִשְׁת־חַיִּל עֹטֶרֶת בְּעֵלָהּ וְכִרְקָב בְּעַצְמוֹתָיו מְבִישָׁה**. The study sheet builds on this verse, and it reads it rightly. The verse gives two pictures of what one wife can be to one man.

A crown is worn on the head, where everyone sees it. The *eshet chayil* (*a wife of valor*) adds to her husband's standing in public. Rottenness is in the bones, where no one sees it. The man still stands and still looks whole, and what holds him up is being eaten away. The sheet says such a wife works by "slowly eroding the husband's peace, stability, and emotional well-being." That is what *raqav* (*rottenness*) means. It is not a blow. It is a decay.

Proverbs does not list what the *mevishah* (*she who causes shame*) does. The other uses of the word show its range. The son who sleeps in harvest shames by neglect (Proverbs 10:5). The son who drives out his mother shames by open contempt (Proverbs 19:26). Either can be true of a wife: what the house needs from her is withheld, or the man himself is held in open contempt.

IV-B. Contempt Named — Three Narratives

Witness One — Hagar and Sarai. When Hagar conceived, *"her mistress was lightly esteemed in her eyes"* (Genesis 16:4), in Hebrew **וַתִּקַּל גְּבוּרָתָהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ**. Nothing about Sarai had changed. Hagar's standing had changed, and with it the way she looked at the one over her.

Witness Two — Michal. *"She despised him in her heart"* (2 Samuel 6:16). Doc 264 and Doc 277 examined this marriage and its long history. Here one detail is added. What began in her heart came out of her mouth as a charge about how he had looked in front of others:

"before the eyes of the maidservants of his servants" (2 Samuel 6:20).

Contempt keeps close watch on a husband's public face.

Witness Three — the Persian court. When Vashti refused the king, his counselors said:

"For the word of the queen will go out to all the women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes" (Esther 1:17).

The Hebrew is **לְהַבְזֹת בְּעֵינֶיהָ בַּעֲלֶיהָ**, from *bazah* (*to despise*). The decree that followed was Persian law, made by a king in his wrath, and it is not covenant law (Doc 264, Section V-G). But the counselors' observation is one the Tanakh makes elsewhere in its own voice: **conduct in one house is seen and learned in others** (Proverbs 22:24–25; Section VI).

In all three the phrase is *"in her eyes"* or *"in her heart."* Contempt begins as a way of seeing a person. The words and the acts come after.

IV-C. With Her Own Hands — Proverbs 14:1

"The wisest of women builds her house, but folly tears it down with her own hands" (Proverbs 14:1).

The Hebrew is **תְּחַכְּמוֹת נָשִׁים בְּנוֹתָהּ בֵּיתָהּ וְאוֹלֶת בְּיָדֶיהָ תִּהְרָסֶנָּה**. Three things in the verse answer the sheet's question about how such a wife *"affects the whole household."*

It is her house. The proverb does not say she tears down her husband's house. What comes down is the roof over her own head and over her children.

She does it with her own hands. No enemy is needed. *haras* (*to tear down*) is the verb for pulling down an altar or a wall (Judges 6:25; Ezekiel 13:14). It is work, done piece by piece.

The same hands could build. *banah* (*to build*) is what Rachel and Leah did,

"who together built the house of Israel" (Ruth 4:11).

"By wisdom a house is built" (Proverbs 24:3),

and *"unless Yahweh builds the house, those who build it labor in vain"* (Psalms 127:1).

A second proverb says the same of anyone, in the masculine:

"He who troubles his own house shall inherit wind" (Proverbs 11:29).

The Hebrew is **עוֹכֵר בֵּיתוֹ יִנְחַל-רוּחַ**. The *okher* (*one who troubles*) is the word used of Achan, whose whole household went down with him (Joshua 7:24–25). A house is one structure. The one who brings it down, husband or wife, is left holding wind.

IV-D. Influence and Control — Jezebel, and Those Unlike Her

The sheet says the wife *"attempts to exert control over him."* The Tanakh shows a wife's control of her husband at its fullest in one house. When Ahab lay on his bed sullen over Naboth's vineyard:

"Jezebel his wife said to him, 'Do you now exercise kingship over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be glad. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite'" (1 Kings 21:7).

The Hebrew of her taunt is **אַתָּה עָתָה תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלוּכָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל**. Then *"she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal"* (1 Kings 21:8). Three marks stand out. She mocked his standing. She took his name and his seal and acted as him. And she did it to accomplish a wrong.

The text does not excuse Ahab. He let her do it, and the verdict names both:

"there was none like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh, whom Jezebel his wife incited" (1 Kings 21:25).

The verb is from *sut* (*to incite*). A husband who hands over his seal answers for what is sealed with it (Doc 277, Section IV-F). The same is said of Solomon: *"his wives turned away his heart"* (1 Kings 11:3–4), against the plain warning of Deuteronomy 17:17.

Against Jezebel the Tanakh sets wives who moved their husbands, and moved them a long way, without taking them over. Esther had to turn a king from his own sealed decree. She fasted first (Esther 4:16). She came to him with honor:

"If I have found favor in your eyes, O king, and if it pleases the king" (Esther 7:3).

She prevailed, and a people was saved. Abigail acted without telling her husband, to stop bloodshed that his folly had set in motion (1 Samuel 25:18–19), and then told him all of it to his face when he was sober (1 Samuel 25:36–37).

THE MARK	JEZEBEL	ESTHER AND ABIGAIL
The end sought	A wrong: an innocent man's death and his field (1 Kings 21:9–10)	A right: lives saved (Esther 7:3–4; 1 Samuel 25:26, 33)
The means	A taunt, forged letters, false witnesses (1 Kings 21:7–10)	Fasting, honest speech, a gift, a plea (Esther 4:16; 5:4; 1 Samuel 25:23–24)
Whose name	His name and seal, used behind his back (1 Kings 21:8)	Her own name, to his face (Esther 7:3; 1 Samuel 25:37)
What became of him	<i>"Sold himself to do evil"</i> (1 Kings 21:25)	The decree was answered and a people saved; David was kept from bloodguilt (Esther 8:7–11; 1 Samuel 25:33)

The Tanakh never says that a wife may not move her husband. It shows wives moving husbands toward good (Genesis 21:12; Esther 7:3–4) and toward evil (Genesis 3:6; 1 Kings 21:7–8), and it judges by where he was moved and by what means.

IV-E. What Loss of Respect Is Not

Four limits belong here, and **Doc 277** (Section IX) sets them out at length.

Disagreement, counsel, and rebuke are not contempt. Sarah's sharp word was right, and Abraham was told to heed it (**Genesis 21:12**).

Refusing to follow a husband into wrong is not contempt. Abigail did not carry out Nabal's refusal, and David blessed her discernment (**1 Samuel 25:33**). The midwives disobeyed a king because they "*feared Elohim*" (**Exodus 1:17**). Honor is never obedience to sin.

Naming a real wrong is not contempt. The law commands it:

"You shall surely rebuke your neighbor" (**Leviticus 19:17**).

A wife has claims the covenant enforces (**Exodus 21:10–11**).

The text knows husbands who have made themselves light. Nabal's own servant said of him,

"he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him" (**1 Samuel 25:17**).

Proverbs counts a wife who is married and unloved among the things that shake the earth (**Proverbs 30:21–23**). A husband who asks why he has become light in his wife's eyes should ask what he has put on the scale.

Finding — that a wife's contempt harms her husband and tears down her own house is **Corroborated** (**Proverbs 12:4; 14:1; 2 Samuel 6:16–23; Genesis 16:4–6**).

The picture of rottenness in the bones rests on **Proverbs 12:4** alone and is a **Single witness** for that image.

That a wife may move her husband by honest counsel is **Corroborated** (**Genesis 21:12; Esther 7:3–4; 1 Samuel 25:23–33**).

That taking over his name and standing to do wrong is condemned, and he with her, is **Corroborated** (**1 Kings 21:7–8, 25; 11:3–4; Deuteronomy 17:17**).

That causing shame is a fault only wives commit is **Not in the text** (**Proverbs 10:5; 19:26**).

V. BEFORE THE CHILDREN — HOW THE WHOLE HOUSEHOLD IS AFFECTED

The sheet says the wife "*undermines him before his children.*" The Tanakh has a law that bears directly on this, and a family history that shows what it costs.

V-A. Two Voices, One Instruction

"Hear, my son, the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother" (Proverbs 1:8).

The Hebrew is שָׁמַע בְּנִי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ וְאֵל-תִּטֵּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ. The father gives *musar* (*instruction / discipline*), and the mother gives *torah* (*teaching*). Her word to her children carries the same name as the covenant's own teaching. The pairing is repeated (Proverbs 6:20). The commandment names both parents:

"Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12), in Hebrew כִּבֵּד אֶת-אָבִיךָ וְאֶת-אִמְךָ. Leviticus names the mother first:

"Each of you shall fear his mother and his father" (Leviticus 19:3).

And the hardest law of the household can be invoked only by both parents acting together: *"his father and his mother shall take hold of him ... and they shall say, 'This our son'" (Deuteronomy 21:19–20).*

The house the Tanakh describes speaks to its children with two voices saying one thing.

This is why undermining a parent in front of children is more than a wrong against the spouse. The honor a child owes each parent is held partly in the other parent's hands. A child learns how much his father weighs from the way his mother speaks of him, and how much his mother weighs from the way his father speaks of her. A wife who makes her husband light before his children is teaching them to break the commandment. A husband who does it to her is teaching them the same.

The curse of the covenant falls on the result: "Cursed is he who treats his father or his mother lightly" (Deuteronomy 27:16).

V-B. The House of Isaac — A Mother, a Son, and a Father Deceived

Tanakh's fullest account of one parent working around the other through a child is in the house of Isaac. It begins with a division that the text lays on both parents:

"Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his game; but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Genesis 25:28).

Each parent had a child. Years later, when Isaac prepared to bless Esau, *"Rebekah was listening" (Genesis 27:5).*

She said to Jacob: *"And now, my son, listen to my voice, to what I command you" (Genesis 27:8).*

The Hebrew is **וַעֲתָה בְּנִי שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי**. She says it three times in the chapter (**Genesis 27:8, 13, 43**). She dressed him in his brother's clothes and sent him in to deceive his father.

Two things must be said in fairness. Rebekah had been told by **Yahweh**, "*the elder shall serve the younger*" (**Genesis 25:23**), so what she aimed at agreed with the oracle. And Isaac was about to give the blessing with his appetite as his guide (**Genesis 27:4**). The text does not make her the villain or him the wise man. It records what the method cost:

The brothers. "*Esau hated Jacob*," and planned to kill him (**Genesis 27:41**).

The mother. She sent Jacob away for what she called "*a few days*" (**Genesis 27:44**). It was twenty years (**Genesis 31:38**). She had asked,

"Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" (**Genesis 27:45**). The text never records that she saw him again.

The son. Jacob deceived his father with a goat and a brother's garment (**Genesis 27:15–16**). His own sons deceived him with a goat and a brother's garment (**Genesis 37:31–33**).

When one parent works around the other through a child, even toward a right end, the child carries the cost, and the pattern is handed down.

V-C. What Children Learn

The prophets say plainly that contempt inside a house is learned.

"Behold, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you: 'Like mother, like daughter.' You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children" (**Ezekiel 16:44–45**).

The proverb is **כְּאִמָּהּ בְּתָהּ**, *ke-immah bittah* (*like mother, like daughter*), and the charge is **גְּעִלַת וּבְרִיָּה**, from *ga'al* (*to loathe*). Ezekiel is speaking to Jerusalem as a figure. But the saying he quotes was a household saying, and his use of it depends on its being true of households: a daughter learns from her mother how a husband is to be regarded. The verse also joins two things that people expect to separate. The mother loathes "*her husband and her children*." The text does not picture a woman who despises the father and still does the children good.

The chronicler says of King Ahaziah, "*his mother was his counselor to do wickedly*" (**2 Chronicles 22:3**). And Micah's picture of a people in ruin is a picture of a house:

"Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. For son treats father as a fool, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house" (**Micah 7:5–6**).

The Hebrew of the middle line is **כִּי־בֶן מִנִּיל אָב בֵּת קָמָה בְּאֵמָה**. The two verses belong together. In the first, a husband can no longer speak freely to his wife. In the second, the children hold their parents in contempt. The prophet sets them side by side as one condition.

The Tanakh also says what the faithfulness of a marriage is for. Malachi, rebuking husbands, says:

"And what does the one seek? A seed of Elohim. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of your youth" (Malachi 2:15).

The first half of this verse is among the hardest lines in the Prophets, and this study does not lean on it. The clause quoted is plain. The words are **זָרַע אֱלֹהִים**, *zera Elohim (a seed of Elohim)*: children who belong to Him. That is what the covenant between a husband and wife guards. Proverbs says it from the child's side: *"the glory of children is their fathers"* (Proverbs 17:6).

A child's own honor is bound up with his father's. The one who pulls the father down in front of the child takes something from the child.

V-D. The Children Are Not Bound to Repeat It

Doc 264 (Section VI-D) recorded the hope the Tanakh holds out. When Korah went down,

"the sons of Korah did not die" (Numbers 26:11).

A son who *"sees all the sins that his father has done, and sees, and does not do likewise"* shall live (Ezekiel 18:14–17).

The same holds for a daughter and her mother. And the purpose of teaching children is stated: that they *"not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation"* (Psalms 78:8).

Finding — that father and mother are to be honored alike, and that a parent who makes the other light before the children works against the commandment, is **Corroborated** (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 21:19–20; 27:16; Proverbs 1:8; 6:20).

That contempt and division between parents are learned by the children and carried on is **Corroborated** (Genesis 25:28; 27:8–45; 37:31–33; Ezekiel 16:44–45; 2 Chronicles 22:3; Micah 7:5–6).

That a child is bound to repeat it is **Not in the text** (Numbers 26:11; Ezekiel 18:14–17).

VI. THE VOICES OUTSIDE THE HOUSE — THE TALEBEARER, THE WHISPERER, AND THE WAY OF THE NATIONS

The sheet names two things behind the wife's conduct: *"gossip"* and *"worldliness."* The Tanakh has exact words for both.

VI-A. The Talebearer — Proverbs 11:13

"He who goes about as a talebearer, reveals a confidence, but he who is faithful in spirit covers a matter" (Proverbs 11:13).

The Hebrew is הוֹלֵךְ רַכִּיל מִגִּלְהָ-סוֹד וְנֶאֱמַן-רוּחַ מְכַסֶּה דָּבָר. This is the verse the sheet cites, and behind it stands a law:

"You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; you shall not stand against the blood of your neighbor: I am Yahweh" (Leviticus 19:16).

The Hebrew of the first clause is לֹא-תֵלֵךְ רַכִּיל בְּעַמֶּיךָ. The lexicons connect *rakhil* (*talebearer*) with the word for a traveling merchant. The talebearer goes from door to door with words as a peddler goes with goods, and like a peddler he needs customers.

Proverbs says he finds them: *"The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner chambers of the belly"* (Proverbs 18:8).

The law sets talebearing in the same verse as bloodshed, and the prophet joins them again: "men of slander were in you, to shed blood" (Ezekiel 22:9).

A marriage is a *sod* (*a confidence*). What a husband and wife know of each other's failures they know because they are one flesh, "naked, and not ashamed" (Genesis 2:24–25). To carry that knowledge out of the house, to friends, to relatives, or to the public, is to be *megalleh sod* (*one who reveals a confidence*). The Tanakh points the quarrel the other way:

"Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal the confidence of another, lest he who hears it put you to shame, and the ill report of you never turn back" (Proverbs 25:9–10).

The Hebrew of the first verse is רִיבְךָ רִיב אֶת-רֵעֶךָ וְסוֹד אַחֵר אַל-תִּגְלֵל. The matter goes to the person (Leviticus 19:17). It does not go to an audience.

This does not make every word spoken outside the house talebearing. The very next proverb says, *"Where there is no guidance a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety"*

(Proverbs 11:14). Proverbs 11:13 forbids the talebearer, and Proverbs 11:14 commends the counselor. The table sets the two apart.

	THE TALEBEARER	THE COUNSELOR	TEXT
What is sought	An audience and a side	Repair	Proverbs 16:28; 11:14
Who is told	Whoever will listen	One able to help, who will keep the matter	Proverbs 20:19; 11:13
What is told	One side, repeated and enlarged	The matter, with the other side able to answer	Proverbs 17:9; 18:17
What comes of it	Close companions separated	Plans established; safety	Proverbs 16:28; 15:22

The law binds the husband in the same words. A husband who carries his wife's faults to his friends is a *rakbil (talebearer)* as much as she would be.

VI-B. The Whisperer and the One Who Incites

Doc 277 (Section X-E) examined the third voice in a marriage:

"a whisperer separates close companions" (Proverbs 16:28),

where the word for companion is the word Proverbs uses for a husband (Proverbs 2:17). That finding stands, and three points are added.

First, the Torah expects the pull away from the covenant to come from the nearest voices. The law of the one who entices in secret names them:

"your brother ... or your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul" (Deuteronomy 13:6).

The verb is from *sut (to incite)*, the verb used of Jezebel. A voice is not safe because it is close.

Second, a new house has to stand apart from the old ones.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife" (Genesis 2:24).

The first outside voices a marriage must be free of are the two houses the husband and wife came from. A marriage that is still governed from a parent's house has not yet left.

Third, every voice must be tested, and the test is not whether it agrees with the husband. The young man who went to Abigail behind Nabal's back was telling her the truth (**1 Samuel 25:14–17**).

The Torah's rule is *"you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently"* (**Deuteronomy 13:14**).

The question to put to a friend, a relative, a teacher, a book, or a screen is this: is this voice moving her toward keeping the covenant, with Yahweh and with her husband, or away from it?

VI-C. The Way of the Nations

What the sheet calls *"worldliness"* the Tanakh calls learning the way of the nations.

"You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes" (**Leviticus 18:3**).

"Do not learn the way of the nations" (**Jeremiah 10:2**).

"You shall not follow the many to do evil" (**Exodus 23:2**).

The Hebrew of the last is **לֹא-תִהְיֶה אַחֲרֵי-רַבִּים לָרֶעַת**. The number of people doing a thing is given no weight. The first psalm describes how a person is drawn in by stages: he walks in the counsel of the wicked, then stands in the way of sinners, then sits in the seat of scoffers (**Psalms 1:1**). And the law of the tassels names the two guides a person follows when he leaves the commandments:

"that you not follow after your own heart and your own eyes" (**Numbers 15:39**; see **Doc 287**).

The eyes come first in one of the prophets' pictures. Ezekiel, speaking of Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife, says *"she saw men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans,"* and *"when her eyes saw them she lusted after them and sent messengers to them"* (**Ezekiel 23:14–16**).

The order is an image seen, a desire formed, and a message sent. The psalmist's answer is *"I will set no worthless thing before my eyes"* (**Psalms 101:3**).

VI-D. Envy — The Other Rottenness

"A tranquil heart is the life of the flesh, but envy is rottenness of the bones" (**Proverbs 14:30**).

The Hebrew is **וּרְקִב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְאָה**, and the word is *raqav* (*rottenness*), the word of **Proverbs 12:4**.

Proverbs names two things that rot the bones: a wife who causes shame, and envy. The two are joined by more than a word. The tenth commandment forbids desiring a neighbor's house, a neighbor's wife, *"or anything that is your neighbor's"* (**Exodus 20:17**). A person who has learned to look at other houses with desire will look at his own with contempt.

VI-E. Eyes on the House

Proverbs describes one woman by where her feet are:

"She is loud and stubborn; her feet do not stay in her house" (Proverbs 7:11). The Hebrew is **הַמִּיָּה הִיא וְסוֹרֶרֶת בְּבֵיתָהּ לֹא-יִשְׁכְּנוּ רַגְלֶיהָ**.

The woman in that chapter is an adulteress, and the verse may not be laid on a wife who simply goes out. The wife of valor goes out constantly, to buy a field and to deal with merchants (Proverbs 31:14, 16, 24). What sets her apart is where her eyes are:

"She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness" (Proverbs 31:27).

The Hebrew is **צוֹפִיָּה הַלִּיכוֹת בֵּיתָהּ וְלֶחֶם עֲצָלוּת לֹא תֹאכֵל**. *tsofiyyah* (*she who keeps watch*) is the word for a watchman on a wall. And Proverbs warns anyone who is drawn into quarrels outside his own house:

"Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is he who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own" (Proverbs 26:17).

Finding — that talebearing and the revealing of a confidence are forbidden to every member of the covenant is **Corroborated** (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 20:19; 25:9–10).

That seeking counsel is commended is **Corroborated** (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22).

That the covenant warns against learning the ways of the surrounding peoples and against following the eyes and the crowd is **Corroborated** (Leviticus 18:3; Jeremiah 10:2; Exodus 23:2; Numbers 15:39; Psalms 1:1).

That envy works the same decay as a wife who causes shame is a **Single witness** (Proverbs 14:30).

That these warnings are addressed to women in particular is **Not in the text**; they are addressed to all Israel.

VII. THE MODERN HOUSE — HOW THIS APPLIES TO THE COVENANT BELIEVER TODAY

VII-A. What Has Changed and What Has Not

Nothing in the human heart has changed since Proverbs was written. Contempt, the tale, the whisper, and envy are what they were. What has changed is their reach, in four ways.

The talebearer has a platform. In the world of the Tanakh the *rakhil (talebearer)* walked from house to house. Today one post or one message carries a household's *sod (a confidence)* to hundreds of people in a moment, and it cannot be called back.

Proverbs 25:10 already said so: *"the ill report of you never turn back."*

The counsel of the many is always in the room. A wife or a husband can now take counsel, at any hour, from feeds, forums, programs, and groups of strangers. Some of those voices teach women to hold husbands in contempt and call it strength. Others teach men to hold wives in contempt and call it strength.

The Tanakh's instruction is the same for both: *"You shall not follow the many to do evil"* (Exodus 23:2).

The images on the wall are in every hand. A person can spend hours each day looking at the best moments of other people's houses, marriages, and bodies. Ezekiel's order of events, an image, then a desire, then a message, now takes seconds (Ezekiel 23:14–16). The tenth commandment and **Proverbs 14:30** speak directly to it.

The civil law has changed. Doc 203 (Section IV-B) set out how civil marriage in the United States became a contract that either party can end without showing cause, beginning with California's law of 1969 and reaching every state by 2010. A covenant believer's marriage rests on something the state did not give and cannot take away: *"Yahweh has been witness between you and the wife of your youth"* (Malachi 2:14).

VII-B. What Modern Research Reports — Comparative Witness Only

The findings below are modern research and not scripture. Most of them report what is found together. They do not prove what causes what. They are cited as comparative witness only, and each is set beside the Tanakh text it touches.

WHAT IS REPORTED	SOURCE	THE TANAKH TEXT BESIDE IT
Among heterosexual marriages in the United States that ended between 2009 and 2015, the wife wanted the divorce in about 69 percent of cases. In breakups of unmarried couples there was no such difference. Married women reported lower relationship quality than married men.	Michael Rosenfeld (Stanford University), <i>"Who Wants the Breakup?"</i> , from the How Couples Meet and Stay Together survey; presented 2015	Proverbs 30:21–23; Exodus 21:10; Deuteronomy 24:5

WHAT IS REPORTED	SOURCE	THE TANAKH TEXT BESIDE IT
A person with a divorced friend, sibling, or coworker was about 75 percent more likely to be divorced. The effect reached a friend of a friend (about 33 percent) and no further.	McDermott, Fowler, and Christakis, <i>Social Forces</i> 92(2), 2013; thirty-two years of data from Framingham, Massachusetts	Proverbs 13:20; 22:24–25; Exodus 23:2
Heavier use of social network sites went with lower marriage quality and more thoughts of divorce. The authors say they cannot tell which causes which.	Valenzuela, Halpern, and Katz, <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> 36, 2014	Psalms 101:3; Numbers 15:39; Proverbs 14:30
About half of partnered adults in the United States say their partner is at least sometimes distracted by a phone when they are trying to talk. About a quarter of those whose partner uses social media have felt jealous or unsure of the relationship because of it.	Pew Research Center, <i>"Dating and Relationships in the Digital Age,"</i> 2020	Proverbs 18:13; 27:4; Deuteronomy 24:5
Young adults who had heard one parent run down the other reported feeling less close to the parent who did it than to the parent who was run down. In nearly all families where it happened, both parents did it.	Rowen and Emery, <i>Couple and Family Psychology</i> 3(3), 2014	Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 11:29; 14:1; 17:6
About four in five marital separations in one long national study ended in divorce, most within three years. Separations that ended in reunion lasted two years on average.	Tumin and Qian (Ohio State University), from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979; presented 2012	Hosea 3:3–5; 5:15; Isaiah 54:7
Of four patterns observed before the breakdown of marriages, contempt was the strongest predictor of divorce.	John Gottman; see Doc 264 , Section V-F	2 Samuel 6:16; Genesis 16:4; Proverbs 12:4

VII-C. Reading the Research by the Text

First: the research does not lay the fault on wives. The first finding says that wives more often end marriages. It also says that wives more often report being unhappy in them, and it cannot say who was

at fault in any of them. The Tanakh would send that finding to the husband first, with its own questions:

1. is she provided for (**Exodus 21:10**),
2. is she gladdened (**Deuteronomy 24:5**),
3. is she loved (**Proverbs 30:23**)?

A study that keeps its attention on the wife's conduct, as this one does at the sheet's request, is bound to say so. The research on children says the same thing in another way: where one parent ran the other down, it was nearly always both.

Second: the research agrees with the text that no marriage stands alone. Divorce clusters among friends, and the state of a marriage moves with what its partners spend their hours looking at.

Proverbs said, *"He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm"* (**Proverbs 13:20**).

Third: tearing down a parent turns back on the one who does it. The researchers called it a boomerang. Children drew away from the parent who did the denigrating. Proverbs said the troubler of a house *"shall inherit wind"* (**Proverbs 11:29**), and that folly tears down its own house *"with her own hands"* (**Proverbs 14:1**).

VII-D. Covenant Practice for Today

THE MODERN FORM	THE COVENANT PRACTICE	TEXT
Posting or messaging a spouse's faults to friends, family, or the public	Take the matter to the spouse first, plainly. Keep the confidence of the house	Leviticus 19:16–17; Proverbs 11:13; 25:9–10
Taking counsel from feeds, programs, forums, and friends who have walked away from their own marriages	Choose counselors: people who keep covenant and keep a confidence, and who will hear both sides	Proverbs 11:14; 13:20; 18:17; Psalms 1:1
Voices that teach contempt for husbands, or for wives, as strength	Put one question to every teacher: toward the covenant, or away from it?	Deuteronomy 13:6–8, 14; Proverbs 16:28; 22:10
Measuring one's own house against pictures of other houses	Guard the eyes. Refuse to covet. Give thanks for what is in the house	Exodus 20:17; Psalms 101:3; Proverbs 14:30

THE MODERN FORM	THE COVENANT PRACTICE	TEXT
Correcting, mocking, or overruling a spouse in front of the children	Disagree in private. Before the children, speak of the other parent with weight	Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 1:8; Deuteronomy 21:19–20
Using a child as a messenger, an ally, or a confidant against the other parent	Never work through a child	Genesis 27:8–13, 41–45
The phone at the table and in the bedroom	Give the spouse a full hearing. Gladden her; do him good	Proverbs 18:13; Deuteronomy 24:5; Proverbs 31:12
Divorce available on one party's word	Remember the Witness. Treat any separation as a road back and not a road out	Malachi 2:14; Hosea 2:7; 5:15
A dispute carried alone, or carried to the internet	Bring in proven elders, and family from both sides	Deuteronomy 1:16–17; Proverbs 11:14; Exodus 18:5–7

Finding — the Tanakh's laws on the talebearer, the crowd, the eyes, and coveting apply to their modern forms without any change in the text: **Corroborated** as to the laws themselves (**Leviticus 19:16; Exodus 23:2; 20:17; Numbers 15:39; Proverbs 25:9–10**). That modern research proves these laws is **Not in the text** and is not claimed here; the research is comparative witness only. That the research lays the breakdown of modern marriage on wives is not what the research says.

VIII. SEPARATION — WHAT THE STUDY SHEET SAYS AND WHAT THE TEXT SHOWS

VIII-A. The Earlier Finding

The sheet says that a husband's moving out is "*an extreme measure*," that it may give "*temporary safety and space*," and that it "*places the marriage in a critical, vulnerable state*." Doc 277 (Sections X-D through X-G) examined separation in full. It found five witnesses that there is a time for distance: the proverbs themselves, Abram and Lot, Jacob and Laban, David and Saul, and **Yahweh** and Israel. It found that the covenant does not command a husband to leave a disrespectful wife and does

not name disrespect as a ground for sending her away (Deuteronomy 24:1). Those findings stand. Three points are added here.

VIII-B. The Sheet Is Right That Separation Is Dangerous

The research cited above found that most separations end in divorce, and that those which end in reunion do so early. The Tanakh's own pattern of separation is hedged on every side for the same reason. When **Yahweh** withdraws from Israel, the withdrawal has a limit of purpose,

"until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face" (Hosea 5:15),

and a limit of time, *"for a brief moment I forsook you" (Isaiah 54:7).*

And when Hosea takes back his wife, faithfulness is required of both through the waiting:

"You shall dwell as mine many days; you shall not play the harlot, and you shall not belong to another man; and so will I also be toward you" (Hosea 3:3).

A separation with no *"until,"* or one in which either spouse begins to live as though unmarried, is not the pattern Hosea records.

VIII-C. A Wife Sent Away and Brought Back

One narrative has not been used in the Library before.

"Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her away, and her two sons ... and came to Moses in the wilderness" (Exodus 18:2–5).

The text does not say why she had been sent back or for how long, and this study adds nothing to it. What it does record is this. The one who brought her back was the elder of her own family. He sent word ahead:

"I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons" (Exodus 18:6).

Moses went out to meet him, bowed, and kissed him (**Exodus 18:7**). And the same chapter shows Moses taking that father-in-law's counsel (**Exodus 18:17–24**). The lesson is a limited one. An elder of the wife's own family can be the bridge.

VIII-D. What the Distance Is For

Doc 277 (Section X-G) showed that the separation **Yahweh** made was aimed at one sentence in the wife's mouth:

"I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now" (Hosea 2:7).

The Hebrew is אֵלֶכָה וְאָשׁוּבָה אֶל-אִישִׁי הָרִאשׁוֹן. A husband who has withdrawn must ask what he is doing to make that sentence possible. Her provision continues (Exodus 21:10). No vengeance is taken and no grudge is kept (Leviticus 19:18; Doc 293).

The door stays open: *"Return ... I will not keep anger forever"* (Jeremiah 3:12). A separated husband who spends the time gathering allies, publishing her faults, or hardening his heart has become what Sections IV through VI of this study describe.

Finding — that separation in the Tanakh's pattern is for peace and return, with a limit and with faithfulness kept on both sides, is Corroborated (Hosea 3:3–5; 5:15; Isaiah 54:7; and the witnesses of Doc 277, Section X-F). That the family's elder may bring a wife back is a Single witness (Exodus 18:2–7). That the covenant commands separation from a disrespectful wife is Not in the text.

IX. THE PATH TO RESOLUTION — THE GATE, THE ELDERS, AND THE WAY BACK

IX-A. The Torah Sends the Hard Case Out of the House

The sheet says that *"severe marital fractures require external spiritual intervention,"* and it names elders. The Tanakh agrees, and its practice is older. The disputes of a household that the household cannot settle go to the elders at the gate: the son who will not listen (**Deuteronomy 21:19**), the bride who has been accused (**Deuteronomy 22:15**), the brother who refuses his duty, whom *"the elders of his city shall call and speak to"* (**Deuteronomy 25:7–8**). Boaz settled a family matter before ten elders (**Ruth 4:1–2**).

The law of the wife who goes astray makes the same point from the husband's side.

A man who suspects his wife may not judge her himself: *"the man shall bring his wife to the priest"* (**Numbers 5:15**).

The law even allows that he may be wrong, for the spirit of jealousy may come on him when *"she has not defiled herself"* (**Numbers 5:14**). No husband is the judge in his own case.

IX-B. Both Sides Heard

"Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother ... you shall hear the small and the great alike" (**Deuteronomy 1:16–17**).

"The first to plead his case seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him" (Proverbs 18:17). One witness does not establish a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15). The law of the slandered bride shows the gate at work. The elders hear the husband's charge. They hear the answer of her father and mother. And they can find against the husband: they chastise him and fine him, *"because he has brought an evil name upon a virgin of Israel"* (Deuteronomy 22:18–19).

Any account of a marriage given by one spouse is a single witness, and that includes an account written down as a study sheet. An elder who receives one has not done what the gate did until he has heard the other.

Job longed for exactly this: *"an arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both"* (Job 9:33).

IX-C. Who Should Step In

Proven elders. The standard is Jethro's: *"able men, who fear Elohim, men of truth, who hate unjust gain"* (Exodus 18:21).

Family from both sides. Jethro stood for the wife's house and was received with honor by the husband (Exodus 18:5–7).

Wise women. The Tanakh gives women this work more than once. The wise woman of Tekoa pleaded an estranged son's case before the king (2 Samuel 14:1–20). The wise woman of Abel saved a city by her counsel (2 Samuel 20:16–22). Abigail stopped a slaughter (1 Samuel 25:23–33).

Older women for younger. Naomi said to Ruth,

"My daughter, shall I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?" (Ruth 3:1).

A wife who has gone astray will often hear a faithful older woman when she will not hear her husband or anyone who speaks for him.

IX-D. What Elders Cannot Do Today

The gate of the Torah was a court with power to fine and to judge. No such covenant court sits today, and Miqdash Bethel does not claim to be one (Doc 240; Doc 264, Section VI-D). Elders today can hear both sides, give counsel, bear witness, and pray. They cannot compel a husband or a wife, and they cannot pronounce a marriage ended.

IX-E. The Way Back for the Wife

"Return, O Israel, to Yabweh your Elohim, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. Take with you words, and return to Yabweh" (Hosea 14:1–2).

The Hebrew is קָחֵם עִמָּכֶם דְּבָרִים וְשׁוּבוּ אֶל־יְהוָה. To *shuv* (*to return*) begins with words. The thing that was done is said aloud, to **Yahweh** first:

"he who confesses and forsakes them shall obtain mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Then it is said to the husband. Where the children saw their father made light, they should see him given weight again, before the same eyes. The tale stops.

The teacher of strife is left behind: "Drive out the scoffer, and strife will go out" (Proverbs 22:10).

And the hands that tore down begin to build, because **Proverbs 14:1** says they are the same hands.

IX-F. The Way Back for the Husband

He is to receive her as **Yahweh** receives: *"I will heal their turning away; I will love them freely"* (**Hosea 14:4** [Hebrew 14:5]).

He keeps no grudge and does not bring the matter up again, for *"he who repeats a matter separates close companions"* (Proverbs 17:9).

He confesses his own part (**Proverbs 28:13**), and he asks what stood behind her contempt, as the six houses of **Doc 277** (Section V) teach him to ask.

He speaks to her heart, as **Yahweh** did in the wilderness (**Hosea 2:14** [Hebrew 2:16]). And he remembers that in the restored marriage the wife says *ishi* (*my man / my husband*) and no longer *ba'ali* (*my master / my husband*) (**Hosea 2:16**).

Finding — that disputes a household cannot settle belongs before elders, and that no husband judges his own case, is **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 21:19; 22:15; 25:7–8; Numbers 5:15**).

That both sides must be heard, and that the elders may find against the husband, is **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 1:16–17; 19:15; 22:18–19; Proverbs 18:17**).

That return begins with confession and is met with healing and no grudge is **Corroborated** (**Hosea 14:1–4; Proverbs 28:13; Jeremiah 3:12; Leviticus 19:18**).

That elders today hold the power of the Torah's court is **Not in the text**.

X. WHAT THIS STUDY DOES NOT SAY

A study that keeps its attention on a wife's faults can be misused. The limits of what the text says are set down here as carefully as the findings.

First: a wife's equal worth and her strong voice are not rebellion. She bears the image, answers to **Yahweh** for herself, and is praised for wisdom, initiative, and teaching (**Genesis 1:27; Proverbs 31:16, 26; Section III**).

Second: a husband's authority is not without limit. The Torah binds it to duty and to penalty. He bears her iniquity if he annuls her vow wrongly (**Numbers 30:15**). The elders fine him if he defames her (**Deuteronomy 22:18–19**). She goes out free if he withholds what he owes (**Exodus 21:10–11**).

Third: nothing here licenses harshness, force, or punishment by silence. **Yahweh** stands against the man who *"covers his garment with violence"* (**Malachi 2:16**). Proverbs says that restraining a contentious wife is restraining the wind (**Proverbs 27:16; Doc 277, Section III-C**).

Fourth: this is not a verdict on any wife. One spouse's account is a single witness (**Deuteronomy 19:15; Proverbs 18:17**). Eli judged Hannah by what he saw, took her for a drunkard, and was wrong (**1 Samuel 1:13–16**).

Fifth: loss of respect is not the breach of faith of Numbers 5. The title phrase of the sheet belongs in the Torah to a charge of adultery. It may not be carried over to a wife against whom no such charge is made (Section I-B).

Sixth: no one is required to remain in danger. Where there is violence or the threat of it, toward a wife, a husband, or a child, the matter is one for immediate help from trusted people and the proper authorities. David forgave Saul and stayed out of reach of the spear (**1 Samuel 26:21–25**).

The sheet speaks of "verbal and emotional abuse" directed at a husband. That happens, and a man living under it is not required to pretend otherwise or to carry it alone.

Seventh: the charge is not laid on women as such. The same book that names the wife who causes shame names the son and the servant who causes shame, the man of wrath, and the man of contentions (**Proverbs 10:5; 14:35; 22:24; 26:21; Doc 277, Section IV**).

Finding — that a wife's equal standing, a husband's unlimited rule, the use of force, or a verdict on one side's word can be drawn from the texts of this study is **Not in the text** (**Genesis 1:27; Numbers 30:15; Malachi 2:16; Deuteronomy 19:15**).

XI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE WIFE WHO GOES ASTRAY

XI-A. The Three Traditions Against the Tanakh

The table sets the three traditions against the Tanakh's own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	✧ ISLAM
Practice today	The Mishnah fines the <i>moredet (rebellious wife)</i> seven dinars a week from her marriage settlement and adds three a week to the settlement of a wife whose husband rebels against her (Ketubot 5:7). A wife may be divorced without her settlement if she " <i>curses his parents in his presence</i> " (Abba Shaul, Ketubot 7:6). The Talmud says the evil tongue kills three: the one who speaks, the one who hears, and the one spoken of (Arakhin 15b). Rabbinic courts and counselors work for <i>shalom bayit (peace of the home)</i> .	Wives are told to respect their husbands and husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Peter 3:1–7). Older women are to teach younger women to love their husbands and children (Titus 2:3–5). Gossip is condemned (1 Timothy 5:13; Romans 1:29). A procedure for disputes is given: go alone, then with one or two, then to the assembly (Matthew 18:15–17). Churches divide over whether these texts teach a husband's headship or a full mutuality.	Men are called <i>qawwamun (maintainers / those who stand over)</i> of women (Q. 4:34). <i>nushuz (ill-conduct)</i> is the name of the wife (Q. 4:34) and of the husband (Q. 4:128), and an arbiter is sent from each family (Q. 4:35). Backbiting is likened to eating a dead brother's flesh (Q. 49:12). A well-known hadith says, " <i>The best of you is the best to his family</i> " (Jami at-Tirmidhi 3895).

ELEMENT	✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✧ ISLAM
Covenant strength	Naming the rebellion of both spouses matches the Tanakh's even hand (Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:17). The weight given to the evil tongue matches Leviticus 19:16 and Ezekiel 22:9 . Its concern for the honor due to parents matches Exodus 20:12 .	The two-sided charge to wife and husband matches Proverbs 31:11–12 and Deuteronomy 24:5 . Older women teaching younger matches Ruth 3:1 . The dispute procedure matches Leviticus 19:17 and Deuteronomy 19:15 , which it quotes. See Section XI-B.	Arbiters from both families match Deuteronomy 1:16–17 and Exodus 18:5–7 . The ban on backbiting matches Leviticus 19:16 . Setting the wives of Noah and Lot beside the wife of Pharaoh (Q. 66:10–11) matches the two women of Proverbs 14:1 .
Covenant departure	A fixed weekly fine for the rebellious wife is a rabbinic enactment. The Tanakh sets none, and the fine laid on the wife is more than twice the sum added for the husband's rebellion. The Torah's own fine in a marriage case falls on the husband (Deuteronomy 22:19).	<i>"The husband is the head of the wife"</i> (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3) is not a Tanakh phrase (Section II). <i>"In everything"</i> (Ephesians 5:24), preached without the Tanakh's limits, goes past Abigail and the midwives (1 Samuel 25:33; Exodus 1:17). Preaching these texts to wives alone gives half of what they say.	The permission in Q. 4:34 to strike a wife has no counterpart in the Tanakh, as Doc 264 and Doc 277 found. Malachi 2:16 sets Yahweh against violence in a marriage, and Numbers 5:15 takes the judging of a wife out of her husband's hands.
Covenant witness	<i>shalom bayit (peace of the home)</i> is Proverbs 17:1 made into a rule of life: a dry morsel with quiet is better than a full house with strife.	The warning that a husband's prayers can be hindered by how he treats his wife (1 Peter 3:7) is Malachi 2:13–14 restated.	<i>"He placed between you affection and mercy"</i> (Q. 30:21) echoes the betrothal of Hosea 2:19 [Hebrew 2:21]: <i>"in kindness and in compassion."</i>

XI-B. The New Testament Passages Tested Against the Tanakh

The study sheet asks that New Testament passages be marked where they line up with the Tanakh. The table tests the three passages the sheet cites and seven others commonly used on this subject. They remain a comparative reference. Where one lines up, the Tanakh text beside it is the authority.

PASSAGE	WHAT IT SAYS	TANAKH WITNESS	RESULT
1 Peter 3:7 (cited in the sheet)	Husbands are to live with their wives with understanding and show them honor, <i>"so that your prayers may not be hindered"</i>	Malachi 2:13–14: Yahweh no longer regards the offering, <i>"because Yahweh has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth."</i> Also Proverbs 15:29; Psalms 66:18	Lines up
1 Timothy 5:13 (cited in the sheet)	Warns against idlers who go from house to house, <i>"gossips and busybodies"</i>	Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 20:19; 26:17; 31:27	Lines up
Romans 1:29 (cited in the sheet)	Lists <i>"whisperers"</i> among the marks of a mind turned from its Maker	Proverbs 16:28; 26:20; Psalms 101:5	Lines up
Ephesians 5:22–33	Wives are to respect their husbands; husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies; quotes Genesis 2:24	Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 31:11–12; Deuteronomy 24:5; Exodus 21:10	Lines up in part. The two-sided duty is the Tanakh's. <i>"Head of the wife"</i> is not a Tanakh phrase
1 Peter 3:1–6	A wife may win her husband by her conduct; Sarah called Abraham <i>"lord"</i>	Genesis 18:12 is cited accurately. Genesis 21:12 must be read beside it: Abraham was told to listen to Sarah	Lines up in part
Titus 2:3–5	Older women are not to be slanderers and are to teach younger women to love their husbands and children	Ruth 3:1; Proverbs 31:26; 1:8; Leviticus 19:16	Lines up
Matthew 18:15–17	Go to the one who wronged you alone; then take one or two more; then tell the assembly	Leviticus 19:17; Deuteronomy 19:15 (quoted there); Proverbs 25:9; Deuteronomy 21:19	Lines up

PASSAGE	WHAT IT SAYS	TANAKH WITNESS	RESULT
1 Corinthians 7:10–11	A wife who separates is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband	Hosea 3:3; 2:7	Lines up with the prophet's pattern. The Tanakh has no statute in these words
1 Corinthians 15:33; Romans 12:2	Bad company corrupts good character; do not be conformed to this age	Proverbs 13:20; 22:24–25; Leviticus 18:3; Exodus 23:2	Lines up
Colossians 3:19	Husbands are to love their wives and not be harsh with them	Malachi 2:16; Proverbs 15:1; Deuteronomy 24:5	Lines up

XII. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. Eight points in two earlier studies on marriage need correction. Corrections 1 through 3 are matters of fact and have been made in the Google Doc of **Doc 203**, so that the website copy can be replaced. Corrections 4 through 8 touch quotation, wording, or teaching, and are left for the Founder's decision; nothing has been changed in the earlier documents for them.

Correction 1 — the closing verse of Doc 203 is not from the Tanakh. Doc 203 ends with the words *"Let marriage be held in honor among all ... for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous,"* and labels them *"Deuteronomy 24 and Malachi 2:14–16 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh."* The words are Hebrews 13:4, a New Testament verse. A closing verse must be a Tanakh passage. It has been replaced with **Malachi 2:14**: *"Yahweh has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and the wife of your covenant."*

Correction 2 — what Proverbs 2:17 says. Doc 203 (Section II-B and its Scripture Index) says the verse calls the husband *"the covenant of her Elohim."* The Hebrew is הַעֲזָבָת אֱלֹהֶיךָ נְעוּרֶיךָ; she *"forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her Elohim."* The husband is the *aluf* (close companion). The covenant is what she forgets. The point Doc 203 was making, that marriage is a covenant, stands, and **Doc 264** (Section V-A) reads the verse correctly. The sentence and the index line in **Doc 203** now follow the Hebrew.

Correction 3 — *teshuqah* (desire) occurs three times, not twice. Doc 203 (Section III-A) reads **Genesis 3:16** "*against its only Tanakh parallel,*" **Genesis 4:7**, and concludes that the word means a grasping, contesting desire. There is a third occurrence, **Song of Songs 7:10** [Hebrew 7:11], where it is a man's longing for his beloved. The contesting sense is one of two readings (Section III-C of this study), and it should be presented as one of two. The phrase in **Doc 203** now reads "*its nearest Tanakh parallel*"; the fuller rewording is left for decision.

Correction 4 — "I hate divorce." Doc 203 (Section IV-C, the table in IV-F, and Declaration V) and the March 2026 study *The Covenant of Marriage* (Part V, in its quotation of **Malachi 2:14–16**) give **Malachi 2:16** as a plain statement that **Yahweh** hates divorce. The Hebrew is כִּי־שָׂנֵא שָׁלַח, *ki sane shallach* (for he hates, sending away). It has no "I," and the one who hates may be **Yahweh** or the husband. *The Covenant of Marriage* says so itself in its Part III, and **Doc 264** (Section V-B) sets out both readings. The quotations should follow the Hebrew: "*For he hates sending away, says Yahweh the Elohim of Israel.*"

Correction 5 — *rosh* (head) as the husband's title. *The Covenant of Marriage* (Part II, item 3, and Part IV) presents *rosh* (head) as the Tanakh's word for the husband's place over his wife. The Tanakh does not use the word that way (Section II of this study). "*Head of the wife*" is New Testament wording (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3). The Tanakh's witnesses for the husband's charge are those of Section III-B.

Correction 6 — Isaiah 3:12 applied to the household. *The Covenant of Marriage* (Part VI) quotes "*women rule over them*" as a description of "*every household where the covenant order has been inverted.*" The Hebrew is וְנָשִׁים תִּשְׁלֹוּ בוֹ. Two cautions apply. The oracle is against the rulers of Jerusalem and Judah: "*Yahweh enters into judgment with the elders of His people and its princes*" (**Isaiah 3:14**). And the reading is disputed: the Septuagint read the same consonants as "*creditors,*" not "*women.*" The verse should be cited as a word about a nation's rulers, with its reading marked uncertain.

Correction 7 — "spiritual adultery." The same Part VI says that a wife who lets another man, or a screen, become her teacher "*has committed spiritual adultery,*" and calls this "*the language of Yahweh Himself.*" The Tanakh uses "*going whoring after*" for following other gods, mediums, and one's own heart and eyes (**Deuteronomy 31:16**; **Leviticus 20:6**; **Numbers 15:39**). It does not use it of a wife who is taught by someone other than her husband. In the Tanakh women hear the Torah directly: "*Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones*" (**Deuteronomy 31:12**; **Nehemiah 8:2–3**). The woman of Shunem went to the prophet over her husband's question (**2 Kings 4:22–23**), and the king's men went to Huldah (**2 Kings 22:14**). What the Tanakh does forbid is the talebearer, the whisperer, and the one who incites (Section VI). The same passage says Eve

"listened to a voice that was not her covenant head, and she led her household into ruin."

Genesis 3:6 says her husband was *"with her,"* and each was judged for his own part, as **Doc 203** (Section I-B) and **Doc 277** (Section X-E) both found.

Correction 8 — Genesis 3:16 as design. *The Covenant of Marriage* (Part II, item 6) defines *teshuqah (desire)* as *"an intense covenant orientation of the woman toward her husband"* and *masal (to rule)* as *"covenantal governance."* **Doc 203** (Section III-A), **Doc 264** (Section IV-A), and this study all place **Genesis 3:16** among the consequences of the first sin. The Library should speak with one voice on the verse.

XIII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE WIFE WHO GOES ASTRAY

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	Man and woman bear the image of Elohim alike, and each answers to Yahweh . A wife's worth, counsel, and strength are not rebellion.	Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18; 21:12; Proverbs 31:11–26
II	The covenant lays on the husband a charge over the way of his house and binds that charge to duty and penalty. It gives him no license for harshness.	Genesis 18:19; Numbers 30:13–15; Exodus 21:10; Deuteronomy 22:18–19; Malachi 2:16
III	A wife who holds her husband in contempt works a hidden ruin in him and tears down her own house with her own hands.	Proverbs 12:4; 14:1; 2 Samuel 6:16–23; Genesis 16:4
IV	Father and mother are to be honored alike. A parent who makes the other light before the children teaches them to break the commandment, and the children carry it on unless they turn.	Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Proverbs 1:8; Genesis 27:8–45; Ezekiel 16:44–45; 18:14–17
V	The talebearer and the whisperer are forbidden to every member of the covenant. A house's confidence is to be kept, and its quarrel taken to the person.	Leviticus 19:16–17; Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 25:9–10

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
VI	The covenant believer is not to learn the way of the nations, or follow the many, the eyes, or envy, by whatever means these reach the house.	Leviticus 18:3; Jeremiah 10:2; Exodus 23:2; Numbers 15:39; Proverbs 14:30
VII	Hard cases go to proven elders who hear both sides. Separation is for peace and return. Yahweh receives the one who returns, and the spouse must do the same.	Deuteronomy 1:16–17; 19:15; Proverbs 18:17; Hosea 2:7; 5:15; 14:1–4; Jeremiah 3:12

XIV. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind a study sheet like this one there is a house: a husband, a wife, and usually children. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: to the wife who sees herself here. You bear the image of **Elohim**, and He hears you as He heard Hagar and Hannah (**Genesis 16:11; 1 Samuel 1:19**). If you have been wronged, say so, plainly, to your husband, and to elders who will hear you both (**Leviticus 19:17; Deuteronomy 1:16**). Then look at your own hands, and ask which work they have been doing (**Proverbs 14:1**). Take with you words (**Hosea 14:2**). Stop carrying the tale (**Proverbs 11:13**). Leave the counsel that taught you contempt (**Psalms 1:1**). Give your husband his weight again before your children (**Exodus 20:12**).

The road back is open, and the One who opened it says, *"I will not keep anger forever"* (**Jeremiah 3:12**).

Second: to the husband. You are not the judge in your own case (**Numbers 5:15**). Before you name her fault, ask what you owe her and whether you have paid it: her provision, her gladness, your love (**Exodus 21:10; Deuteronomy 24:5; Proverbs 30:23**). Publish nothing (**Leviticus 19:16**). Keep no grudge (**Leviticus 19:18**). Rule your own spirit (**Proverbs 16:32**). If you have withdrawn, keep the door open and keep faith while you wait (**Hosea 3:3**). When she returns, speak to her heart (**Hosea 2:14**).

Third: to the children, grown or growing. Honor your father and your mother, both of them, whatever each has said of the other (**Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 23:22**). You are not bound to repeat what you saw (**Ezekiel 18:14–17**).

Fourth: to elders, family, and friends. Hear both sides before you believe either (Proverbs 18:13, 17). Keep what you are told (Proverbs 11:13). Do not be the whisperer who separates companions (Proverbs 16:28). Let the older women do what Naomi did (Ruth 3:1).

Fifth: to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Each tradition has preserved something true about the house, and each has at some point laid more on the wife than the written text lays. Test the teaching by the text.

Tanakh's last word on a wife is praise: *"Her sons rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her"* (Proverbs 31:28).

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"A wife of valor, who can find? Her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he lacks no gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life."

Proverbs 31:10–12 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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