

Selected Scripture on Divorce

Rules for the priests:

Lev 21: ¹The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean...

⁵“Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. ⁶They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the LORD by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy.

⁷“They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or *divorced* from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. ⁸Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the LORD am holy — I who make you holy.

⁹“If a priest’s daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire.

¹⁰The High Priest... ¹¹...must not enter a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean, even for his father or mother, ¹²nor leave the sanctuary of his God or desecrate it, because he has been dedicated by the anointing oil of his God. I am the LORD.

¹³“The woman he marries must be a virgin. ¹⁴He must not marry a widow, a *divorced woman*, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, ¹⁵so he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the LORD, who makes him holy.”

Lev 22: ³But if a priest’s daughter becomes a widow or is *divorced*, yet has no children, and she returns to live in her father’s house as in her youth, she may eat of her father’s food. No unauthorized person, however, may eat any of it.

Ezek 44: ²²They [*priests*] must not marry widows or *divorced women*; they may marry only virgins of Israelite descent or widows of priests.

Rules for the people:

Deut 22: ¹³If a man takes a wife and, after lying with her, dislikes her¹⁴and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying, "I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity,"....Then her parents shall display the cloth [proof of virginity] before the elders of the town, ¹⁸and the elders shall take the man and punish him. ¹⁹They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the girl's father, because this man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not *divorce* her as long as he lives.

²⁰If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl's virginity can be found, ²¹she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death...You must purge the evil from among you.

²²If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

²³If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, ²⁴you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death ... You must purge the evil from among you.

²⁵But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die....

²⁸If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, ²⁹he shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never *divorce* her as long as he lives.

Deut 24: ¹If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a *certificate of divorce*, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ²and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a *certificate of divorce*, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴then her first husband, who *divorced* her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Use of divorce by the prophets as a figure of speech representing the relationship of Israel to the LORD

Is 50: ¹This is what the LORD says: “Where is your mother’s *certificate of divorce* with which I sent her away? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away.

Jer 3: ¹“If a man *divorces* his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers — would you now return to me?” declares the LORD.

⁸I gave faithless Israel her *certificate of divorce* and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery.

Mal 2: ¹¹Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. ¹²As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob — even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty.

¹³Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. ¹⁴You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

¹⁵Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

¹⁶“I hate *divorce*,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

Jesus on Divorce

Matt 5:31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who *divorces* his wife must give her a *certificate of divorce*.’
³²But I tell you that anyone who *divorces* his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the *divorced* woman commits adultery.

Luke 16:18 “Anyone who *divorces* his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a *divorced* woman commits adultery.

(see also Mark 10:11-12 below)

Matt 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to *divorce* his wife for any and every reason?”

⁴“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to *divorce* his wife?”

³“What did Moses command you?” he replied.

⁴They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a *certificate of divorce* and send her away.”

⁵“It was because your hearts were

⁷“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a *certificate of divorce* and send her away?”

⁸Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to *divorce* your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who *divorces* his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

¹⁰The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

¹¹Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.

¹²For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”

hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.

¹¹He answered, “Anyone who *divorces* his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹²And if she *divorces* her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

Paul on Divorce

1Cor 7: ¹⁰To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife *must not separate* from her husband. ¹¹But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband *must not divorce* his wife.

¹²To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, *he must not divorce her*. ¹³And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, *she must not divorce him*. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.