

# **Biblical Womanhood:**

## **The Rabbinic and Transcending New Testament View on Women in Scripture**

In this paper I intend to show the Rabbinic traditions at the time of the Early Church and the subsequent positions taken by Paul and the Apostles, as they brought the birth of the New Covenant into being, and how that impacted concerning women.

### **Rabbinic Position on: The Authority of The Father over His Daughter**

In rabbinic tradition the final authority over his unmarried daughter rested with the father. This also allowed the father to sell his unmarried daughter into slavery or prostitution. If he should want to sell her into slavery the rabbis had two limitations for this to happen. First of all she had to be under the age of puberty, because no girl over the age of puberty could be sold into slavery. Secondly this could only be allowed in cases of extreme poverty, it could never become a matter of course. This was because not only did the father have full authority over his daughter, but also over her possessions and everything his daughter made or produced. Even if she was to find something it would legitimately belong to her father until the age of her maturity. (Sanh 76a)

This authority also reflected another way in that the father was the only one who could release his daughter from a vow she may have made until maturity. Once she was older he could no longer do that. The age of maturity for a boy was 13 years old when he partook of his Bar Mitzvah, but a girl was always assumed to have matured six months earlier.

### **New Testament Position**

In 1Cor 7:25-40 the subject introduced concerns virgins, and in this topic we shall see the authority of the father in these cases. Notice how Paul uses the pronouns in v28

**“But even if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries she has not sinned”**

When Paul speaks of a male he addresses them in the second person, because it is the male who does the choosing. When he speaks of the female virgin he moves from 'you' to 'she'(v36-38) because she does not make the choice because that is left up to the father.

**“If any man thinks he is behaving improperly towards his virgin. If she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin ,let them marry”**

This shows that in either case the father has authority whether he keeps her single or allows her to marry, the father has all the authority which has transpired from Rabbinic tradition.

### **Rabbinic Quotes**

- 1) Marriages were made in heaven, for they were destined from birth, and G-d has only decreed in His providence, who should end up with whom.
- 2) G-d created the universe in six days and since then He has been arranging marriages.

## **Rabbinic Tradition**

### **Bridesmaids**

It can be noticed in all of the Jewish traditions there is the use of lights or candles or even lamp stands. This was especially true in Jewish weddings it was rare not to have any of the above in Jewish weddings. In the first century of the New Testament, it was custom for the bridesmaids to escort the bride to the place of the wedding, with lights, torches, or lamps.

This was a distinctive element in the Jewish wedding. (Kid 30a)

The Jewish wedding service had four basic stages:

1) The arrangement with the father of the groom with the father of the bride. He then paid the brides price. This was frequently done when the bride and groom were children. Because of this time lapse a long time could take place between stage one and two. The minimum time allowed was always a year, but it was usual that the first meeting between the two was their wedding day.

### **The Fetching of the Bride**

2) The next stage was the fetching of the bride. At some point the groom would go to the house of the bride and fetch her to his home. Now because this was often many miles away, the virgins of the town would go to the edge of the town with lamps or candles and wait until they saw the bridegroom coming. Once they saw the bridegroom they would escort her to the place of the wedding ceremony, and because that could be in the evening they took their lamps. In actual fact even if it was daytime they still lit their lamps.

### **The Wedding Ceremony**

3) This would be something that only a few would be invited, usually this would be the friends and relatives of the bridegroom and his bride.

### **The Wedding Feast**

4) This would last for seven days, and at this point many more would be invited to the wedding feast than to the wedding ceremony. The wedding feast and the wedding ceremony are two distinct stages and should not be confused.

### **The Ketubah**

The Ketubah is an Aramaic word referring to a written document which was basically the marriage contract. This is a contract all Jewish couples sign prior to the wedding ceremony, in which the husband pledges to work for her, to honour her, to support her, and maintain her. It is always written in Aramaic and was developed out of Babylon with the technical arrangements made by the parents of both parties. The rabbis arranged this and say that to marry without it is prostitution. In this document the husband agrees to pay his wife a certain sum of money if he divorces her, or if he dies prematurely. Usually a certain sum or object of wealth is set aside and the husband is forbidden to make use of it, as its for the wife's security. As some time was needed to accumulate the sum, it could delay the marriage. So Rabbi Simon Ben Shetach in 200BC made an amendment to the husband coming up with the money in advance; So whatever he owed those assets were declared unusable except within the marriage. This would therefore allow the couple to marry before the sum was raised.

If a husband was in the future wanting to divorce his wife, before he could give her a bill of divorcement he would have to come up with the agreed sum of monies that had already been agreed upon before the marriage. In other words you had to be very well off to get a divorce. (Keth 63b)

The specific rights the Ketuba guaranteed for women was:

- 1) To feed her
- 2) Clothe her
- 3) Give her conjugal rights
- 4) To provide medical care
- 5) To redeem her from any kind of captivity (if it was in war or into slavery)
- 6) To pay for the cost of her funeral and burial

The Ketuba also gave rights for the husband:

1) Whatever funding she brought into the marriage, he could use the profit from the assets she brought into the home. He could never own it because it would rightfully always belong to her, Therefore he had the right of usage but not the right of ownership.

2) She had to agree to work to support the family. What kind of work she did and how much was dependent on the size of the dowry she brought into the marriage.

### **The Wife's Position and Her Dowry**

The position of a wife improves based on the size of her dowry, it can go up or down. For example if she was very poor and had no dowry at all to bring into the marriage, she had to work for her husband in seven areas:

- 1) Grinding
- 2) Baking
- 3) Washing clothes
- 4) Cooking
- 5) Suckling her child
- 6) Spreading the bed
- 7) Working in wool spinning, knitting etc.

This makes it clear that she would be responsible in all seven areas if she had no dowry.

However if she was to bring into the marriage one slave, she becomes exempt from the first three things, Grinding, baking, washing because the slave does that. If she was to bring two slaves she would also be exempt from cooking and suckling her child. If she was to bring three slaves she would also be exempt from spreading the bed and working with wool.

The Rabbis then decreed that if she was to bring four slaves into her marriage she could just sit in a chair. However the Rabbis also decreed that she must always perform certain duties for her husband which is only right and proper for a wife to do:

- 1) Wash his hands and face because that would not be proper for a slave.
- 2) Whatever work a woman was to do if she was married she was never to work in the field. She could do this work if she was single or a widow as is the case with Ruth, but once married she was exempt. It then became a Rabbinic concern that if a woman brought many slaves she would have no work to do and would become lazy.

- 1) Rabbi Eleazer decreed [“Even if she brings a hundred slaves her husband should make her work in wool lest idleness should lead to intrigues”](#)
- 2) Rabbi Ben Gamaliah said [“The husband should not allow idleness in his wife lest it drive her into melancholy”](#)

### **The Man Without a Wife**

The Rabbinic view of a man without a wife is; [“A man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good.”](#) That was their basic view.

## **Betrothal**

The betrothal is usually arranged by the parents, where the father of the groom pays the father of the bride the bride price. Once this has taken place a betrothal, in Jewish thinking has all the validity of a marriage, however it did not bestow any rights, but it required a bill of divorcement to break, there was no conjugal rights to them during the betrothal period.

## **The Talmudic Marriage**

So what is a legal Jewish marriage? A Talmudic marriage is a mutual agreement between a man and a woman to live together as a family and to undertake and respect all the obligations of the Ketubah, the marriage contract.

Marriage in this context is not considered a sacrament and because of that it is not mandatory for a Rabbi to officiate or even to be present. Rather the proceedings are done before two witnesses were certain blessings, benedictions, and promises are made and as such it is only a civil legal matter because it is not a sacrament. The custom of inviting a Rabbi to officiate began in the middle ages, mostly copying the Christian accepted culture, rather than containing what remained within the Jewish culture. So then under Talmudic Law when a man and woman wish to marry they only have to say so, then make relevant professions before two witnesses, then sign the Ketubah. Once the transfer of money takes place she enters the groom's house, have sex and that finalizes the wedding procedures. During the Talmudic period which includes the New Testament era they married quite young, boys between the ages of 16-22 and females from as young as 12 years of age. (Taan 1v,8)

## **The New Testament Position**

### **1Cor 7:1-7**

We have already stated the Rabbinic view that Marriage is an ideal state, and the only state that could interrupt the study of Torah to rejoice with the bride. There are however two things to note here in the case of the Apostle Paul's teaching in 1Cor 7:1-7, contrary to the common Jewish thought, sometimes the single state is the ideal state. This is because in v32-34 the single person has much more time to devote to the work of the Lord. So here we see the other concept that marriage does take away from serving the Lord, which is true for both men and women.

### **Responsibility**

Within the confines of Judaism we have already mentioned the Ketubah and how both parties have responsibilities in this document. The New Testament does not ask for any kind of written or oral document to guarantee provisions for a wife. However we do find in 1Tim 5:8 the teaching that the man is responsible to provide for his own wife:

**“If any man does not provide for his own wife and children he is worse than an infidel”**

This like the Ketubah provides the woman not only with food and clothing and shelter, but also with conjugal rights. Also in 1Cor 7:1-7 Paul also makes the point that they must not defraud each other sexually except by consent for prayer, then only for a short time.

## **Rabbinic Tradition**

### **Idle Women**

In the Rabbinic concept, the larger the dowry a woman brings the less work she has to do, but there was still a concern she might become idle. There is a similar concern in 1 Tim 5:11-15:

**“But younger widows refuse; for when they have waxed wanton against Christ they desire to marry, having condemnation, because they have rejected their first pledge. And with-all they learn to be**

idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tale taters and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bare children, rule their household well and give no occasion to the adversary for reviling, for already some have turn a side after Satan”(Keth 30a)

Here Paul's teaching is that the younger widows should marry rather than depend on the church for support. In order to prevent them becoming idle tale tellers, busy beginning conspiracies against the Pastor of the church.

### **A Married Person's Concern**

In 1 Cor 7:34-35 we see that it is the concern of a married husband to make his wife happy and the married wife has the same concern for the husband. This is something they both should strive for or it will detract from the work of the Lord. So it is expected that each member of this unity should meet the needs of his or her partner. The state of betrothal mentioned in the Rabbinic proposal is today what we would call engagement before marriage (Math 1:18-23) We may also notice that in the New Testament marriage is also not regarded as a sacrament or ordinance.

## **The Relationship of Husband and Wife**

### **Rabbinic Tradition**

#### **The Principle of Subjection-Subordination**

There is a concept taught in Rabbinic theology, the basis of which is the Adam & Eve account in Genesis. This teaches that the wife is inferior to her husband and because of this he is to rule over her. So we see that Rabbinic tradition decrees the wife to be submissive not so she is humiliated ,but so she can be directed by the authority of her husband. This is because the authority was given to man by G-d So in this state of subordination her function is to serve her husband. If she was to marry outside her tribe she along with her children would have to become members of her husbands tribe. So for instance, if she was born of the tribe of Asher and her husbands tribe was Judah, she would have to become a Judean as they can not have half and half tribes.

#### **How a Wife Gains Merit**

The main way for a wife to gain merit , is to encourage her husband and sons to study Torah, which is the Rabbinic traditions as well as the words of Moses. This is important even if she has to earn the money for to keep the family, whilst he learns Torah. Before Rabbi Akeba was married he was considered a complete ignoramus. He was a lowly shepherd and knew nothing of scripture, but shortly after their marriage his wife sent him to Rabbinic school and there they where separated for twenty years whilst she worked to provide for his learning. This would not be an ideal thing in New Testament times, but it was ideal in Rabbinic thinking.

Sometimes especially now in modern times it has got out of proportion and we see in orthodox circles the husband never works, he just studies Torah. His wife does all the earning until the children become old enough then they provide for the family. But alas because of this none of his sons would follow him into Orthodox Judaism. It was usually the wife and eldest son that made the provision for the family. (Ber 17a)

#### **The Husbands Attitude Towards the Wife**

There are two main things by Rabbinic decree:

- 1) A man should love his wife as himself.
- 2) A man should honour his wife more than himself.

In loving her he must be equal, in honouring her he must be superior, he should love his wife more

than himself, and should honour her more than himself. (Shab 118b)

### **The Treatment of the Wife**

In the Rabbinic tradition it states, a man should never speak angrily towards his wife. Because women are prone to tears and sensitive to wrong, and he must always be aware of the fact that she is the weaker vessel. The Rabbis taught that a man must never strike his wife, and there are two types of penalty if he does. First there is the legal penalty in which he is liable for damage pain and shame caused to her. Even when there is no legal penalty recourse, there is always the divine penalty. So the Rabbis say “Be careful lest you vex the wife for her tears come easily”. Rabbis knew the treatment of the wife was important as God would not let bad treatment pass. G-d’s blessings or disciplines would come as to how a man treated his wife either mentally or physically.

### **Rabbinic Quotes**

“A man should be fearful lest he vex his wife for her tears come easily and the vexations place her near to God. If all the other gates of Heaven be shut the gate of tears is always open.”

This plainly states that the blessings that come upon a household are determined by the way the man treats his wife.

There is another which says “If your wife is short bend down to take advise from her” (BM59a)

“If in anger your one hand removes your wife, let the other hand build her back into your bosom”

The Rabbis made it clear that wives must be treated with respect, with love, and with honour, and they took a very negative view towards the striking physically of a wife or causing her to experience any kind of pain or mental trauma.

### **New Testament Position**

#### **The Principle of Subjection and Subordination**

This principle comes well into the New Testament with seven passages which teach the principle of subjection and subordination, two of which are based on the Adam & Eve account. The seven passages are 1 Cor 14:34-35, Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18, Titus 2:1-5, 1Peter 3:1-6, 1Tim 2:11-15. We will deal with 1 Cor 11:2-16 at a later time.

#### **Women And Scripture**

In the Rabbinic tradition of Judaism women were encouraged to study scripture:

2 Tim 1:5

“Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grand mother Lois and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded also in thee”

2 Tim 3:15

“And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus”

The mother and the grandmother to Timothy were Jewish women who were well versed in scripture and had instilled that knowledge to Timothy so he was wise about scripture from a baby. Now you may remember we said that in Rabbinic Judaism the wife gains merit by encouraging her husband and son to study Torah. So it is not know whether the wife gains merit by obeying 1Tim 2:15, that “a woman would be saved through child bearing” There is some merit in child bearing as the

woman ought to learn her children from a young age to keep Torah.

### **The Husband's Attitude Towards his wife.**

The New Testament writers broadly remained in the same position taken by the rabbis with Eph 5:25, 28, 33. “Husbands should love his wife as himself”

Also Col 3:19 gives the admonition “Love your wife” The Rabbis distinguished between love and honoring you may recall. They took the position you should love your wife as yourself, but you must honour your wife more than yourself. 1Peter 3:7 also makes this point that its not just the act of loving your wife that is important ,but honouring is the most important point and respecting. It is noteworthy that in the Rabbinic tradition the treatment of your wife was important, because God would not let it pass . So if you make your wife cry, G-d will take note of those tears, and His blessings or His disciplines will come upon you depending on how you treat your wife both physically and mentally. We have this in Peters statement of 1Peter 3:7:

“Ye Husbands,in like manner,dwell with your wives according to knowledge,giving honour unto the woman,as the weaker vessel( this is why he should give honour)as being joint heirs of the grace of life, to the end that your prayers be not hindered”.

## **Polygamy**

### **Rabbinic Tradition**

Polygamy was sanctioned by law but never recommended. It was actually discouraged in Rabbinic literature and used the Adam and Eve situation to teach monogamy as the ideal. All of the known Rabbis are monogamists except for one, and this one had two wives mainly because there was no clear statement in the Mosaic Law or in Rabbinic tradition of that day.

So Polygamy was sanctioned but never was it recommended. For Jews who lived in the North and East of Europe it was not outlawed until 1000 AD, but among the Sephardi Jews it was outlawed only in recent years of this century. Its the same in the New Testament were we have a similar situation, we do not have a clear mandate against polygamy. The prohibition that is there only affects church leaders in Titus 1:6 and 1 Tim 3:2. The same principle remains whether we take this to be a polygamous passage generally or one of multiple marriage, through one at a time. It remains there is no clear cut passage against polygamy in the New Testament but there is a limitation as we see in Mark 10:1-12, but all that there is appears to be only addressing church leaders.

In the beginning around 30BC there was two major schools of Pharisaic theology developing, one was headed up by Hillel(Oral Law) the other by Rabbi Shammai (Written Law) ,however there was over 300 points of disagreement between the two schools which continued until after the destruction of Jerusalem. In that period between AD70 -AD90 they restructured Judaism but could not afford this debate to continue,neither could they say that either of the Rabbis was wrong. So the verdict was that the words of both was the words of G-d, but the Law continued in Hillel's teachings. In the times of Yeshua (Jesus) the debate was still going on because this was pre-AD70 and the areas for disagreement had to do with the basis for divorce.

Both agreed that the Mosaic Law allowed for divorce but their disagreement was the basis for it. It was all based upon the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 which reads as “For a matter of uncleanness”. Shammai interpreted this as meaning immorality and that it was the only basis acceptable. He also included in that spiritual immorality, which also referred to idolatry. So the only acceptable reason for divorce was immorality or idolatry. Shammai did not make this an option, it was a requirement and so immorality physical and spiritual was the only grounds for divorce and a husband had no option but to divorce his wife ,even if he still loved her. The school of Hillel interpreted this act as a matter of uncleanness which was interpreted as anything that displeases the husband. So even if she spilled his soup, it was grounds for divorce. Other reasons given by other Rabbis were ,if a woman was barren for ten years she could be divorced. Rabbi Akeba said “Even if

a man found a woman more beautiful than his wife”. Eventually the Pharisees went along with the school of Hillel and so moral and religious incompatibility were the minimum grounds for divorce. The maximum grounds was any grounds you wanted to be divorced was sanctioned but not encouraged. (Jeb 65a)

### **Frequency of Divorce**

There was a similar thing with Polygamy, it was sanctioned by law but not encouraged, however divorce was discouraged by Rabbis. These are some Rabbinic statements on the subject; “Even the alter sheds tears, when one divorces his wife.” and “He who divorces his wife is hated by God”. So while on one hand divorce became a wide foundation, it was discouraged by the Rabbis and not frequently practiced. (Sot 44a)

### **The Right of Divorce**

You will find in Rabbinic Judaism as well as in Orthodox Judaism, the right to divorce your wife is only with husbands. A man can divorce his wife, but a wife can not divorce her husband. This is because in the Israeli marriage it can only happen in the spiritual realm, there are no civil marriages and no civil divorces. This is still the same in Israel today, but however the Rabbis gave the Jewish courts a privilege so that the court could find a way to encourage the husband to give his wife a divorce. The Jewish court of Law can find a way to force the husband to write a bill of divorcement, including jailing or whipping but there needs to be certain conditions:

- 1) If he fails to support her financially.
- 2) If he refuses her marital relations or has become impotent.
- 3) If he is guilty of unfaithfulness.
- 4) If he is a wife beater.
- 5) If he has a loathsome disease such as leprosy

On these five conditions a court of law can force a husband to grant his wife a divorce.

In a most recent case in Israel a husband actually spent a couple of years in jail before he granted his wife a divorce. There was also a case where a husband and wife spent ten years apart, and she can not remarry in Israel because she did not receive a bill of divorcement and today divorce is still one sided. The husband in this case would have to return her dowry. (Jeb 63b)

### **The Means**

Under Rabbinic Law they do not recognise a civil divorce, so it has to be a religious divorce. And that requires a Bill of Divorcement and like the Ketubah it has to be written out in specific language, and the wording has to be in Aramaic. It's a simple note stating time, date and place which has to be exactly worded otherwise it would be invalid. The husband has to go to a lawyer to have it done for him. This is done like this to enable the husband to have more time to think of the consequences. He then would have to return the dowry and all else he has gained through the marriage.

### **The Right To Re-Marry**

Under Rabbinic Law a valid divorce automatically contains the right to remarry. Any who can also show she has received a Bill of Divorcement has the right to remarry. (Keth iii:5)

## **The New Testament Position**

### **The Long Shammai Debate**

It should be kept in mind that Matt 5 was written in context, and that basically although Yeshua was respecting Rabbinic Law (How be it Oral Law) as authoritative, throughout the sermon on the mount you see statements like “They say this, but I say”. Throughout chapter 5 you will read “Ye hath heard it said” and that is the term for Rabbinic Oral Law, because at this time it had not been written

down, so therefore it was Oral. Had He been talking about the Mosaic Law He often said “You have heard that it was said of them of old time”. So what He does throughout the Sermon on the Mount is pick out a Mosaic commandment the show how it differs from the Pharisaic interpretation and the righteousness of that command.

So one of the areas He deals with is the area of divorce, Matt 5:31-32

“It was said also, whoever shall put away his wife, let him give a writing of divorcement; But I say unto you, that everyone that puts away his wife save for fornication, maketh her an adulteress whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.

So we see that anyone divorcing his wife for anything except adultery or fornication turns her into an adulteress along with any future partner she may have. So when we look also at Math 19 and Mark 10 this is where the Shammai -Hillel debate comes in. How Matthew and Mark explain this is based on the audiences they were writing to. Matthew was writing to Jewish audiences and Mark was writing to Roman or Gentile audiences. Therefore anything either one may have missed out from what the other had written, was because it was not relevant to those audiences and they were not affected by it. The entire passage in the Matthew account is 19:3-12 and the account in Mark is 10:2-12;

This is the question raised in Mark...

Verse 2 “And they came unto Him Pharisees and asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? The way the question is raised is in a neutral form as the Pharisees did not want to let on which side of the debate they would take. Now because Mark is writing to Roman Gentiles who would most likely know nothing about this debate, Mark writes it simply with the issues being the right of divorce, the bases for divorce, the question itself is supplied neutral. Now if we look at Math 19:3, Matthew is dealing with a Jewish audience that would be aware of the debate which is why he gives a fuller version of the debate.

Matt 19:3 “And there came unto Him Pharisees trying Him, saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? “For every cause” was left out by Mark because it was irrelevant, and the Mathew account reflects the view of Hillel, because his view was that a wife can be divorced for any cause. If we look at the answer Yeshua gave in Matthew...

Matt 19:9 “And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that marries her when she is put away committeth adultery..”

Where as in Mark 10:11-12 “And He saith unto them, whosoever put away his wife, and marry s another commits adultery.” Math 5 gives fornication as the only basis for divorcing your wife so at this point it appears to side with the position of the Shammai school of thought. This was because once a wife commits adultery she has to be divorced because divorce was mandatory and not optional. However here Yeshua does not make it mandatory, He makes it optional but with the biblical ideal of forgiveness and reconciliation. So on this issue He sides with Shammai and gives a very limited set of grounds for divorce, He does not go as far as Shammai. Now there appears to be an added basis for this thinking in 1 Cor7:12-16.:

“But to the rest say I, not the Lord, If any brother hath an unbelieving wife and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her. And the woman an unbelieving husband, and she is content to dwell with him, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. Yet if the unbeliever departs, let him or her depart, the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”

In Judaism religious incompatibility was also grounds for divorce, so if the wife is an idolater she is to be divorced since they view morality as both physical and spiritual. Paul does not give the

grounds of religious incompatibility as grounds for divorce. Therefore if one of the partners is an unbeliever but decides to dwell with the believing partner Paul's admonition is to stay married. Another situation for example is if two unbelievers marry and later one becomes a believer, but the other is content to still live with him/her the instruction is to stay married. But however if the unbeliever wants out of the marriage the believer is not advised to fight the proceedings, let them go.

### **The Frequency of Divorce**

Although divorce is allowed on these grounds, in neither passage is divorce encouraged for as with the Rabbis it is discouraged, and the teachings of Yeshua in Mark 10:4-9 and Math 19:4-8 are in agreement. The Biblical ideal is the permanency of marriage with no divorce. So when they responded "Why did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement" Yeshua reminds them that Moses did not command a Bill of Divorcement, it was allowed because of the hardness of their hearts. In 1Cor 7:10-11 Paul emphasizes his point:

"But unto the married I give charge, yea not I but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband, but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband and that the husband leave not his wife"

So we see from this passage a wife has not to separate from her husband, as a believer she has two options if she does leave she must stay unmarried or set her mind on making the marriage work.

### **The Right of Divorce**

In the Matthew and Mark accounts based upon the audience they are addressing, keep in mind the one sidedness of Jewish divorce. The husband can divorce the wife but the wife has no right of divorce. (Math 5:31-32) All the other scriptures on this subject differ depending on how relevant it was to the audience in question.

## **Religious Observance**

### **Rabbinic Tradition**

#### **The Separation of the Sexes**

There is a separation of the sexes in all religious services, which would include things we may not consider to be particular religious such as weddings, but within Judaism it is. This of course applies in religious observances. The sexes even those who are married appear to be physically separated because of the demands of the Rabbis. They felt that there were three things about a woman that was sexually arousing to men. Her skin, her voice, and her hair. So they believed this was necessary so as not to cause a distraction or temptation during a religious service. The response is seen during all three of these areas in Orthodox synagogues:

#### **The Leading of a Service**

A woman is not allowed to lead a religious service. This is because one of the a for mentioned distractions is her voice. Because a woman's voice is sexually arousing to some men, and would take their attention off their G-d, it is right that she should not speak in prayer meetings or for that matter teach publicly. (Men 43b)

#### **Head Covering**

In Rabbinic Law a married woman is to wear a head covering at all times. However this does not apply to single woman. The reason for this is because like a woman's voice, her hair can be arousing, along with her skin especially around the knape of her neck, although she should show no flesh anywhere, married or single. This however is not at all the same as in the Muslim culture, its

not the face that should be covered but the hair. So its customary to put your covering over the parts of your head in which the hair grows. This raised in rabbinic circles a question, can a woman wear a wig in place of her head covering?

This question arises because the Talmud only forbids a woman to display her own hair, and a wig is not her own hair. The ruling was that a woman must not wear a wig without a covering as well. This is because the quote from the Talmud was 'The factor of appearance' this would violate the tradition because it would appear like her own hair, and men may still gaze at her. So even when she wears a wig she must have a covering over the wig. Now this has over the years developed into the Ultra Orthodox practice that when a woman marries she shaves her hair off, and keeps it that way for the rest of her life.

The logic behind all this is she is not to make herself attractive to any other man, but her own husband, who should love her anyway. So when you drive through the Orthodox section of Jerusalem all women wear head coverings at all times. The men do also but for different reasons, because he is in the constant presence of God.

### **Religious Education**

It is a fact contrary to popular belief, that Jewish women in Rabbinic times were not kept ignorant, they were taught to read and write from a young age. The Rabbinic debate at that time was, 'What should women be taught as regards religious writings.' the over whelming opinion among the rabbis was; That a woman be exempt from any requirement to study the Torah. However she may be encouraged to do so, but it was optional, but strongly encouraged.

As a result Jewish women were often very knowledgeable as far as scripture goes, eventually surpassing men in many cases, because they studied Torah, but prohibited to study the Oral Law. They were allowed to be taught those areas that affected them , such as the laws of menstruation, but unless it was particularly relevant they were not taught.(Kid1.7)

### **Keeping the Commandments**

There are three prayer that are recited daily by Orthodox Jews. One of which is “**Blessed art thou Father Lord our God, who has not made me a woman**”(Men 43b) This has been the target of some of the Feminist Movement's attack on Orthodoxy, without knowing the context of the prayer. Now this prayer was not made because of some demeaning of women, but is merely thanking G-d who has given men more commandments to obey than women. Men are given the chance to obey all the commandments of the Mosaic Law, women on the other hand have not been given this task because of their duties in the home and domestically. (Ber 17a)

The Rabbis have listed seven specifically that women need not do:

- 1) The Sh'mah prayer of Deut 6.
- 2) Putting on the Phylacteries.
- 3) Wearing the Tallit.
- 4) Counting the Omer, until Feast of Weeks.
- 5) Constructing a booth in Tabernacles.
- 6) Recital of the Luv lav blessings.
- 7) Lifting or Blowing the Shofar on Feast of Trumpets.

These are just seven laws which women are exempt from, therefore she has not got an obligation to study Torah, although she is encouraged to do so. Now by her own choosing a woman can take on additional commands such as such as offerings but she is exempt from offering sacrifices except those that are relevant to her female status such as the offering after the birth of a child.

## New Testament Position

### The Separation of the Sexes

Within the New Testament you do not have the separation of the sexes during religious observance. Now although this is true and male and female sit together, the Early Church did obey the teaching of the Rabbis concerning things about a woman that can be arousing to men. Namely Skin, Voice, Hair we will now discuss this in turn.

**Skin**-The New Testament admonishes women to be dressed modestly (1 Tim 2:9) and by being correctly attired this will not cause distraction. Now you may wonder what duly attired means. This will most likely vary from place to place and culture to culture but it should mean generally that she should expose no flesh above the elbow and legs should be covered up.

**Voice** -The voice emphasis was one of silence in a church or place of worship. This is in accordance with 1Cor 14:34-35 which says:

“Let the woman keep silence in the churches for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them be in subjection, as also saith the Law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.”

The overall context that Paul here is referring to is concerning speaking in Tongues and Prophecy, but if this was adopted today it would empty most Charismatic churches very quickly, however he does not limit it to that alone, he also says she is not allowed to even ask questions whilst in a place of worship, but must wait and ask her husband at home. Now you may ask what if she is not married? Well in that case she should ask the older women after the service.

1Tim 2:11-12 “Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness.”

In both cases you will notice the use of the word 'quietness' and this means she should show her subjection by learning in quietness. She is also prohibited to teach or to in anyway exercise dominion over a man. This is not a cultural issue its entirely theological, and Paul does not say its because its sexually arousing, but goes straight to the points of subjection and subordination within G-ds house by means of silence.

### Head Covering

#### 1 Cor 11:1-16

**Men:** Contrary to the Rabbinic Tradition Paul asks men to have their heads uncovered, so right away we see he disagrees with his own culture he was brought up with.

**Women:** In the case of women, the emphasis should not be on braiding the hair, but also what he is focusing on is her 'hair do being seen in public'. 1Tim 2:9 says “not with braided hair”

1 Peter 3:3 says “Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair”

So one thing they are not to emphasize is the hairdo in various outward styles. These passages tell women that they should have a head covering and not turn the church into a fashion show.

One thing all these apostles have in common is they agree with the Rabbis on this issue. However there are two points of difference found here:

1) In Rabbinic Judaism the woman has to have her head covered at all times once she is married. It is not just at religious services. 1Cor 11 is dealing with meetings of the church from chapter 11 to 14 we see various ways to conduct the meetings and the protocols of that meeting, so a woman is not

expected to cover her head at all times only at synagogue services.

2) The Rabbinic reason for head covering is the woman's hair is sexually arousing, however in the various reasons Paul gives for head coverings here sexual arousing is not mentioned, instead he give various reasons created for the woman such as v10 Angelic observation, and also demonic angelic observation. The woman's hair is her glory as appose to mans which is his uncovered head, therefore the woman's hair should be covered on these grounds:

- A) Verse 3 Headship of the male
- B) Verse 7 Divine reflection;The man reflects the glory of G-d, the woman of man.
- C) Verse 8,12 Woman was created out of man, not man from woman.
- D) Verse 9 Woman was created for man, not man for woman.
- E) Verse 10 Angelic observation.
- F) Verse 13-15 Her hair is her glory, it must not detract from Mans glory his head.

All these are theological reasons not one is cultural or Rabbinic that Paul gives, nor should we adopt worldly cultural practices in the church of God.

### **Religious Education**

In the Rabbinic world women are educated, they could both write and read which is reflected in the scripture. We can see this in Elizabeth in Luke 1:41-45, Mary: Luke 1:46-55, Anna: Luke 2:36-38. These are just a few woman who knew the scriptures very well and were able to quote it. Women were always present in the multitudes and stories that both Paul and Yeshua taught. There was the woman with the issue of blood (Matt 9:20-22), Mary learning at the feet of Yeshua.(Luke 13:10:17), The feeding of the five thousand (Matt 14:21) The Four Thousand (Math 15:38). So it was where ever He went He had the presence of women listening to His teaching. Although it says a woman should learn in quietness it advocate learning as a main part of the request. Both the mother and the grandmother of Timothy were learned women in the scriptures(1Tim 1:5, 3:15), the concept that women were kept ignorant may have been true in other cultures but it was not the case with Jewish women.

### **Keeping the Commandments**

While it is true that women were not commanded to study Torah, it was encouraged that she lean at her leisure. So in the New Testament there is no special exemption from following commandments, although men and women have different roles.

### **Woman's Credibility**

#### **Rabbinic Tradition**

##### **The Status**

The status here is one of both subordination and inferiority,since women were in some realms considered to actually be inferior.

##### **Female Witness**

A women in this context could not be one of the two or three witnesses necessary for to appear for a court of law. She could not serve as a witness because a female witness was considered to be unreliable. This was as true in a Court of Law as it was in Criminal Law. It all had to do with serving as a witness in a none legal sense. For example the New Moon was determined by the report of two witnesses and a woman could not be one of those two witnesses.

##### **Business**

Women on the other hand were empowered by their husbands to run those shops and businesses so

that is why in the New Testament world Jewish women are encouraged to be knowledgeable in the business realm, and regularly read the Jerusalem Street Times.

### **A Minion**

Women could not be part of a minion or quorum, which before any witness service is conducted you have to have. Usually ten adult Males would make a Minion, adult would mean from the age of 13 upwards. But even if you had nine men and a thousand women you could still not conduct a service.

### **Leadership Roles**

By Jewish Law, women were not eligible for judicial or administrative functions in a none religious sense. You could not have women judges, even in a civil sense.

### **Civil and Penal Law**

Women were equally legal as far as receiving the judgements of civil and Penal Law.

## **New Testament Tradition**

### **Status**

Where as Rabbinic status was, women were both subordinate and inferior, the New Testament teaches subordination, but in no way teaches inferiority. Galatians 3:28 shows the picture of equality in the 'neither male nor female' concept, neither does the New Testament have special rules and regulations that apply only to women, like the Rabbinic ones do. However the basis for some of the things such as silence, head coverings etc are based solely on subordination and submission, and not on inferiority.

### **Female Witness**

In this context what is interesting to note is that in the first two resurrection appearances of Yeshua, it was to two women and not men. The first was to Mary Magdalene in Mark 16:9-11 and John 20:11-18, and His second appearance was to a group of women in Math 28:9-10. This is also a good argument against fabrication, since some say that this text is only fabrication. Now if we are saying that the resurrection accounts in the gospels are fabrication, they would automatically have been Jewish fabrications, since they were written by Jewish writers. Now if these were Jewish fabrications it was a terrible way of doing it, since it was necessary that all the witnesses were men and not women. Also we forget that the Holy Spirit also played a part in this, so are we now saying that Almighty G-d has made a mistake? No, these were written like this because that was the way it happened. The very fact that the first witnesses were women and not men tells us this was not a fabrication. However the Male attitude is reflected in Luke 24:11 because when the women reported as having seen Him, the men thought it was idle talk, and did not take it seriously. However two of the prominent ones did, John & Peter, and decided to investigate. So if you notice the Jewish rules against women being a witness and then see that Yeshua appeared first to women it give authenticity on that perspective.

### **Business**

Under the Rabbinic Law we spoke of women being eligible for business situations, and in the New Testament we have an example in Lydia **“a seller of purple”** Acts 16:14 a woman who had made a business in the working of purple , which in those days was a lucrative business since all the Romans loved to wear purple cloaks etc.

### **Leadership**

The New Testament neither rules on or encourages female leadership in the church ,however you are more often seeing it in the business and secular realms now than ever before. This is becoming a

trend and we are now seeing them more often in churches.

### Law

As far as the Law is concerned women are subject to the same disciplines as men in both divine discipline as in church discipline, and in keeping with G-d's standards.

### Conclusion

### Various Rabbinic Views

There are many various Rabbinic views about women, some positive some negative but we must not go away with the idea that all Rabbis hate women or indeed that Judaism hates women. They are dealt with on the principle we went through earlier, its all about headship and how they understand it. Basically its G-d first then man then woman, and that is just how they think it is not a case of women being totally inferior beings, because Jewish women today have a better status than Muslim women. In fact they are in the heart of most businesses and at the top of the army posts along with many other sections of society they even fight with the men on the front line. So lets go through some quotes to help us get the picture:

- “Women have greater powers of discernment than men.”
- “Women are more tender hearted than men”
- “Israel was redeemed from Egypt by virtue of its righteous women”

The most negative charge brought by Rabbis against women in Rabbinic literature is their tendencies for occult practices, its no mistake that Mediums are usually women , so the quotes read: “Women are addicted to witchcraft” (Joma 83b)

- “The majority of women are inclined towards witchcraft”(Aboth 11:8)
- “The more women the more witchcraft” this was Hillel's view. (Sanh 67b)

And so we see both positive and negative views about women, but what can not be denied is the importance they had with Yeshua, He supported them and they financially supported Him and the apostles(Luke 8:3). He was close to Martha and Mary the sisters of Lazarus (Luke 10:39, then there was Anna the Prophetess (Luke2:36) and many others. Hopefully the case for women has been righteously dealt with here from a balanced point of view as well as a Biblical one.

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